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# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



## THESIS

RIGHT FACE  
Understanding German Political Developments

by

Ronald E. Draker

June, 1994

Thesis Advisors:

Donald Abenheim  
Jan S. Breemer

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RIGHT FACE  
Understanding German Political Developments

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

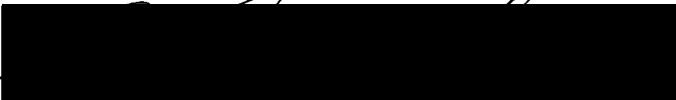
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## **ABSTRACT**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The rise of the German right wing movement as a phenomenon preceded and superseded German reunification. Its true roots lie in economic, social, and political changes common in most post-industrial societies, and its modern-day incarnation has been detectable in Germany since the mid 1980s. This thesis will suggest that the extreme right-wing has steadily gained popularity well before reunification. Though the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communism in eastern Europe, and the reunification of Germany have all contributed to economic, social, and political problems in Germany, these are not the sole sources of this problem.

Germany is not alone in experiencing a rise in nationalism, and right-wing extremism. France, the United Kingdom, and the United States face similar issues, as do several other European states. What makes Germany's troubles appear unique? What is the common element of state and society in all post-industrial societies? Gaining insight and possible answers to these questions of nation and politics is the purpose of this thesis.

It is crucial to identify properly the causes of German right-wing popularity and to identify the active dangers from the imagined perils. False perceptions about the



impact of unification can misdirect external focus and attention from the real causes and problems that Europe must address. Unification since 1990 itself has not brought about all of Germany's woes. Rather, it has exacerbated other symptoms that many western societies are experiencing. For instance, the West's developed states are all undergoing an economic transformation from manufacturing to high technology and services. Just as the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century created a great social upheaval, so does the current post-modern revolution. The social dislocations caused by economic change result in dissatisfaction with politics as usual, and xenophobia. When certain people feel that the political and social system does not work for them, or become anxious about their economic security, they are susceptible to political extremes. Germans of today are no different from Americans in this regard. Unfortunately, Germany is being hit with an economic revolution at the same time that reunification and massive immigration from the east take place. These additional burdens, coupled with the historical legacy of the Nazi era, are monumental problems for any democracy to overcome, and they are the elements which make Germany's troubles seem unique.

The conservative right and the extreme right-wing have experienced a surge in popularity and political support since 1988. The focus of many scholars and journalists has

been on the connection between the reunification of Germany in October 1990 and the rise of militant right-wing violence. The common argument suggests that unification and the collapse of communism in the east, which have led to widespread immigration, are the sources of all of Germany's troubles. The economic costs of unification and the flood of immigrants have soured the early euphoria over reunification. Since the extreme right-wing plays on the public's fears of being "overrun" by foreigners, and losing German prosperity, and has gained in popularity, then it is assumed, this must be at the root of the far right's recent success. However, Germany's economy was in decline before unification, and the right wing was gaining in popularity since the mid 1980s due to dislocations caused, in part, by the common post-industrial economic transformation.

Before the end of the Cold War and German reunification, there existed a West Germany and an East Germany. Two very different states whose orientation was true to their titles, west and east. Now that Germany is united, the new state finds it is no longer a western state nor an eastern state, but rather a central power once again. Germany's role in central Europe was an important and dominating one before the end of the Second World War. As the bridge between east and west, Germany is resuming its pivotal position in the

region.<sup>1</sup> This is taking some time, for Germany's political system was not prepared to deal with the sudden historic changes of 1989, and the subsequent collapse of communism to the east, or the unexpected reunification.

Immigrants have poured into Germany because of the formerly liberal immigration laws and the relative economic prosperity of Germany, not to mention the war in the Balkans. Perhaps more important, however, many refugees from the east seek Germany because it is the first prosperous state they reach. The impact of geography cannot be overstated. Germany's interest in maintaining stability in eastern Europe is a vital national security issue. The ramifications of instability and war are massive migrations of people into Germany.

Those equipped with a better perspective on the nature of Germany's dilemmas can best understand the momentous social and political changes affecting the Western world. Misunderstandings can lead to the possible political isolation of Germany in a time when Germany needs support from its allies. Germany cannot solve all of its problems alone. In order to avoid over generalizations and false historical analogies, one must look in depth at these issues facing Germany in the past and present.

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<sup>1</sup>Wolf Gruner, "Germany in Europe," in The State of Germany, ed. John Breuilly (New York: Longman Publishing, 1992), p. 57.

The last one hundred years of German political history give a clear picture of a people and society struggling with the forces of modernity. There is an unmistakable line of continuity. Each major event helps explain how Germany has arrived where it is today. Underneath the surface of these momentous events, however, were the slow developing forces of change, much like the seismic frictions beneath the earth, building to the point that the pressure is so great that there is a cataclysmic release of energy which in a moment can change the entire landscape.

Imperial Germany (1871-1918) faced a multitude of social, economic, and political problems associated with rapid industrialization. The old monarchical political institutions proved ill-suited to the demands of modern society. The domestic political crisis contributed to the foreign policy actions of Germany, pushing the *Reich* into the First World War. Defeat added new burdens to Germany's still unresolved political crisis. When the worst depression in modern times hit in 1929, the seeds of radical nationalism sprouted. The determined and opportunistic Adolf Hitler gained power in the process.

The destruction of the Nazi regime ushered in a new international order, and left Germany divided. Not until the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War, was Germany given a second chance at nation-building. The difficulties of assimilating two divergent cultures will

concern Germany for years to come. Unfortunately, this process obscures the structural problems in West German society before unification.

Today, western society confronts the challenges of a second industrial revolution. Post-industrialization is as unrelenting in its disruption of the social fabric of states as the Industrial Revolution of 1750-1900. Where authoritarianism proved incapable of dealing with monumental change, will democracy fair any better?

Before exploring German political developments, important terms, such as nationalism, right-wing extremism, and conservatism, must first be defined. Nationalism has assumed many forms during the course of history. In the late 1800s it stressed loyalty and patriotism to one's ethnic community. It placed one's nation and culture above others. More radical elements of nationalism added racism and Social Darwinism, espousing a struggle of nations with only the strongest surviving. The ugly side of nationalism rationalized the de-humanization and murder of people considered unfit for the "master race during the Third Reich, 1933-1945."

After the destruction and misery of the Second World War, all forms of nationalism were discredited. The once powerful mass appeal of nationalism was lost, with only small groups of revisionists still clinging to the ideals. Today, the number of people flocking to the banner of

nationalism is once again on the rise. The horrible memories of the war are fading. The young are finding some appeal in the ideas of nationalism in a complex world of growing internationalism. Perhaps this is a normal backlash to the progress of the European political integration.

Conservatism embraces the status-quo and traditions. Maintaining order and stability are primary objectives. In nineteenth century Germany, the conservative elites were the ruling class, their power being derived from their vast estates. The prevailing political order was only an advanced form of the feudal world. Once the Empire fell in 1918, the traditional forces became reactionary, seeking a return to the old regime. Conservatives today represent a wide cross section of German society. The once fairly homogeneous political spectrum has fractured, with progressive conservatism, ultra-conservatism, and status-quo conservatism being the main focal points.

The right-wing of politics begins with the ultra-conservatives wanting to return to the old order. The far right and right-wing extremists have different agendas, yet both favor some form of authoritarian rule. The more extreme elements favor a return of National Socialism, seeking to destroy democracy and class structures in favor of the national community. A blend of extreme nationalism and socialism, National Socialism, returns to the ideas of

racial superiority, yet sees the necessity in restructuring society in order to win in the struggle of nations.

In order to appreciate how nationalism has helped shape German political developments in the past and present, one must look at its beginnings. An historical look at the path of German nationalism helps explain most Germans' uneasiness with the entire concept, especially when connected with racism. Those on the extreme right are trying to rewrite the history books; hoping to rehabilitate the Third Reich and the terrible consequences of its twisting of nationalism. The only defense to these attempts is an educated public awareness to the truth.

## II. THE RISE OF RADICAL NATIONALISM: 1871-1918

The demise of the Holy Roman Empire with its structures swept away by "the forces of war and revolution," namely the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, cleared the way for the German nation state.<sup>2</sup> James Sheehan states:

The story of the revolutionary period took on a significance of its own, important less for what happened than for what people thought had happened. In memoirs, history books, novels, and paintings, the 'wars of liberation' were shaped to fit an unfolding narrative of nation-building, in which the Volk's historic rising became at once the prologue and precondition of the nation's ultimate triumph.<sup>3</sup>

Hajo Holborn aptly summarizes the progression between feudalism and the Industrial Revolution:

Metternich and the statesmen of the Germanic Confederation had succeeded in subduing the political movements of the French Revolution. But the political ideas of the French Revolution had been only one aspect of the broad process of social transformation from feudalism to a bourgeois society, and this transformation was not brought to standstill by the political victories of the rulers of restoration.<sup>4</sup>

The cooperation and "solidarity" between the monarchical forces of the Prussian, Austrian, and Russian, Empires, which had successfully repressed the 1848-49 revolutions,

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<sup>2</sup>James Sheehan, "State and Nationality in the Napoleonic Period," in The State of Germany, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Hajo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, 1840-1945, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969, ninth reprint 1975), p. 3.



became strained by the Crimean War in 1854-55.<sup>5</sup>

The old international order was giving way at the same time that the internal social and political structures of central and eastern Europe were under severe strain. Bismarck managed to keep the forces of change in check while he was in power. His elaborate secret alliances also kept the European peace after 1871. When he stepped down in 1890, however, it was as if the international and internal system were collapsing simultaneously. The true nature of the Bismarckian order was the skillful holding action of the "Iron Chancellor," who offered false hopes for future change. Unwilling to reform the political institutions, Bismarck relied on exhortations of national duty to keep the system going. In the end Bismarck did more harm to Germany than many appreciate. He built false hopes for the conservative elites to maintain their power, and he gave the masses false expectations of change.

#### **A. A NEW NATION IS BORN**

The conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War, in 1871, brought the second German Empire. The fall of Napoleon III and the French Empire removed the final obstacle to the advent of *Kleindeutsches Reich*. In place of dozens of small

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<sup>5</sup>William Carr, "The Unification of Germany," in The State of Germany, p. 83.  
(Also see) Norman Rich, Why the Crimean War?, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985)

and large principalities, a new powerful state emerged, altering the balance of power in Europe that had existed since 1648. (Rebuilt in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars)<sup>6</sup> Stretching from the Masurian Lakes in East Prussia to the Rhine river and the Ruhr Valley, from the North Atlantic and Baltic sea coasts to the Bavarian Alps in the south, stood a diverse, resource-rich country of fifty million people.<sup>7</sup>

The architect of this second Empire was the Prussian Minister President, Prince Otto von Bismarck. Through diplomacy and quick, decisive wars, Bismarck excluded Austria and France from southern Germany, and built a federated Empire on Prussian terms. For Bismarck and many Prussian conservatives, it was important to establish a Germany dominated by Prussia instead of a German Confederation which dominated Prussia. Consequently, Germany's constitution favored the interests of Prussia's agrarian elite's, and made any future changes to the constitution impossible without Prussian support.<sup>8</sup>

Before the end of the Napoleonic Wars, there existed competing ideas for the creation of a German nation state.

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<sup>6</sup>Gordan A. Craig, Europe Since 1815, (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich College Publishers, 1961; reprint ed., 1974), pp. 13-17.

<sup>7</sup>Volker R. Berghahn, Modern Germany: Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>Gordon A. Craig, Germany, 1866-1945, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 39.

Some people favored the loose federation of all German princely states into a new Holy Roman Empire. Others wanted a more centralized state that included all German speaking peoples. There were also variations that included or excluded either Prussia or Austria. Of course, there were those who simply wanted to continue with the status quo.<sup>9</sup>

The National Liberals of Germany, a party of intellectuals, middle class businessmen and professionals, sought the formation of a strong state that included Prussia, but excluded the Hapsburg Austria. Founded on liberal principles with a parliamentary government controlling most functions of state, Germany would have looked more like Great Britain than Prussia, if the National Liberals had had their way.<sup>10</sup> Bismarck foiled these aspirations. Diplomatic maneuvering and military victories, from 1864 to 1871, allowed Bismarck to enlist National Liberal support for his plans to build a new state.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, certain liberals remained hopeful that constitutional reform would be possible in the near future.

As a consequence of the way the new nation state was formed, particular interests of the German states endured.

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<sup>9</sup>John Breuilly, ed., The State of Germany, (New York: Longman Publishing, 1992), pp. 3-11.

<sup>10</sup>Geoff Eley, Reshaping the German Right, (Yale University, 1980; reprint ed., Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1991), pp. 19-40. and Craig, Germany, pp. 61-100.

<sup>11</sup>Brian Bond, War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 13-39.

For example, in order to persuade the Wittelsbach dynasty of Bavaria to join the new Empire, Bismarck had to make major concessions and accord privileges. Bavaria remained exempt from taxes on beer and spirits, retained control of postal services, railroads, the right to collect taxes, and its army during peacetime.<sup>12</sup> Other states gained concessions depending on their size and influence. Bismarck allowed these states more autonomy, for his constitution also gave the largest state, Prussia, more leverage in the dualistic mechanisms of the Prussian constitution and statecraft.

## **B. POLITICAL STRUCTURES**

Gordon Craig has described the essence of the German constitution best:

The basic purpose of the constitution, in short, was to create the institutions for a national state that would be able to compete effectively with the most powerful of its neighbors, without, however, sacrificing, or even limiting, the aristocratic-monarchical order of the pre-national period. This task invited complication, and it was in fact achieved at the price of ambiguities and contradictions that were always awkward and, as the years passed, invested German parliamentary life, and politics in general, with an increasing amount of friction and frustration.<sup>13</sup>

The new German state structure consisted of two legislative bodies. The upper House (Bundesrat) consisted of appointed delegates from the twenty-two princely states and three free cities.<sup>14</sup> Any changes to the constitution and all

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<sup>12</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>14</sup>Berghahn, Modern Germany, p. 20.

legislation had to pass through this house before being sent to the lower House (Reichstag). To ensure that the constitution would respect Prussia's agrarian conservative interests, the authors of Article 78 of the Constitution stipulated that any such legislation would be defeated if fourteen votes were cast against it. With seventeen votes, Prussia held the most votes in the Bundesrat.<sup>15</sup>

The Reichstag seats were filled by nationwide elections. Universal suffrage by secret ballot for all German males twenty-five or older made the elections seem modern and fair by the standards of the day.<sup>16</sup> The system, however, was designed to favor the rural landed interests, rather than the liberal, socialist-inclined cities. Seats were awarded to electoral districts of varying size, without regard to population. Consequently, sparsely populated east Prussian estates could muster more conservative seats than the densely populated, industrial centers of the Ruhr.<sup>17</sup> This asymmetry remained central to the political culture of the second Reich and the first Republic.

Members of the Reichstag were not voted into their seats. Instead, the parties received seats according to the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup>Brett Fairbairn, "Interpreting Wilhelmine Elections: National Issues, Fairness Issues, and Electoral Mobilization," in Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany, ed. Larry E. Jones, and James Retallack (Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 17-48.

election results and then filled these positions with people of their choice, according to party lists. As a result personal accountability to the electorate did not exist. The Reichstag wielded limited power. It did not possess the power to initiate legislation, but could only act on bills submitted to it from the government. Though the Reichstag did control the funds, it never used this power to its full benefit. One reason may be that the Kaiser could dissolve the Reichstag if an impasse developed between government and parliament, and call for new elections. The constitution did stipulate that elections could not be postponed.<sup>18</sup>

On paper, the Kaiser held the greatest power. All government ministers were appointed by the Kaiser, including the Chancellor, who was responsible for the administration of state and foreign policy. In addition, the Army answered only to the Emperor. The role of personalities was decisive. Bismarck wrote the constitution to favor his position as Chancellor under Emperor Wilhelm I, who, for the most part, allowed Bismarck to run the state and foreign policy as he generally saw fit. Though the Army remained outside the Chancellor's reach, Bismarck's influence on the aging Monarch was great indeed.

Under altered circumstances, after 1888, with different personalities in power, Bismarck's system faltered. The young, energetic Wilhelm II sought to change the course of

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<sup>18</sup>Craig, Germany, pp. 38-60.

Germany's foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> This development eventually led to Bismarck's retirement in 1890. Wilhelm replaced Bismarck with men whom he believed he could control. Germany's foreign policy thereafter suffered immensely from lack of continuity or cohesion. The army planned for a European war ignoring the possible diplomatic considerations. The Chancellor and the Foreign Office were never consulted or involved in the making of the war plans.<sup>20</sup> This would have disastrous effects in 1914.

After Bismarck's retirement in 1890, Germany had four Chancellors before the First World War: Caprivi, Hohenlohe, Buelow, and Bethman-Hollweg.<sup>21</sup> All faced the difficult problem of reconciling the Kaiser's wishes with the growing pressure for domestic reform on a wide range of issues, from taxation to elections. Answerable to the Kaiser, yet constantly under attack from the Reichstag, these men turned to foreign policy to divert attention from growing domestic problems. Buelow, Chancellor from 1900-1909, stated in a letter; "I am putting the main emphasis on foreign policy, only a successful foreign policy can reconcile, pacify,

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<sup>19</sup>George F. Kennan, The Decline of Bismarck's European Order, Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, latest reprint ed., 1989), pp. 368-370.

<sup>20</sup>Arthur Rosenberg, The Birth of the German Republic, 1871-1918, translated by Ian F. D. Morrow (New York: Russel & Russel Inc., 1962, first published in German, 1931), pp. 67-68.

<sup>21</sup>Craig, Germany, pp. 224-338.

rally, unite."<sup>22</sup> Due to the Kaiser's meddling, however, foreign policy only became a source of conflict between the conservative elites and the rising radical nationalistic pressure groups, dissatisfied with failures abroad.

Even with the internal social crisis mounting, the conservative forces opposing political change were strong and well established. Two of the crucial pillars of the monarchical order were the Prussian Army and the Church. The Prussian Army managed to survive the attempts of Scharnhorst, and Gneisenau to subject it to the people's will.<sup>23</sup> Officered primarily by the nobility, the Prussian, and later German Army, was committed to maintaining the old order. The stunning victories over the Austrians and the French in the Wars of Unification, 1866-1871, elevated the Army to a cult status. The officers from the middle class, who held important positions in logistics and staff work, were heavily indoctrinated into supporting the Army and Monarchy.

Religion played a decisive role in German society. There was no division of state and church. The Catholic and Protestant churches both emerged as powerful forces in body politic. At the insistence of the crown, the Protestant

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<sup>22</sup>Katherine Lerman, "Bismarck's Heir: Chancellor Bernhard von Buelow and the National Idea, 1890-1918," in The State of Germany, p. 83.

<sup>23</sup>Gordan A. Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 37-81.



church tended to avoid pressing social issues to support the status quo instead as the state church in Prussia.<sup>24</sup> The Catholic church was the bulwark against Prussian domination, with its own political party, the Centre Party, which acted as a mouthpiece for its concerns and interests. Politicized religion also helped preserve the sectional differences of Germany. Southern and western Germany were predominately Catholic, whereas Northern Germany was mainly Protestant.

The Thirty Years War, 1618-1648, left most of Central Europe traumatized.<sup>25</sup> The death, destruction and insecurity caused it had formed strong regional bonds. Because fears of religious persecution persisted, the Catholic south was determined in keeping the federation as weak as possible. Bismarck's attempts to break the political power of the Catholic church backfired, uniting the Catholic community more than ever.<sup>26</sup> This religious division would continue to politically haunt the Empire and the Republic after 1918.

### **C. FORCES OF CHANGE, 1890-1918**

In the mere twenty years after German unification, industrialization rapidly transformed the country. The period of 1890 to 1913 witnessed the greatest changes.

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<sup>24</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 180.

<sup>25</sup>Gordan A. Craig, The Germans, (New York: Penguin Books, 1982, second reprint 1991), pp. 16-21.

<sup>26</sup>Halo Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, p. 262-266.

Volker Berghahn states:

The development of modern Germany is best understood against the background of the Industrial Revolution which affected Central Europe with full force in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Britain had experienced the blessings and the traumas of industrialization earlier and more slowly, but nowhere else in Europe did the transition from an economy based on agriculture to one dominated by industry occur with the same rapidity as in Germany.<sup>27</sup>

In 1890 Germany produced 4.1 million tons of pig-iron; by 1913, this had jumped to 17.6 million tons of steel, compared to Great Britain with 8.0 million tons of pig-iron in 1890 and 7.7 million tons of steel in 1913.<sup>28</sup> Germany's relative share of world manufacturing also grew at a phenomenal rate. In 1880 Germany claimed 8.5 percent of the world's manufacturing, compared to Great Britain's of 22.9 percent. By 1913, Germany's share had grown to 14.8 percent, while Britain's declined to 13.6 percent.<sup>29</sup> The United States was the only other country in the world to witness similar growth rates during this period.

The Industrial Revolution also fueled a population explosion. Between 1890 and 1913, Germany added seventeen million people to its population, the greatest increase of all European countries except Russia.<sup>30</sup> Population demographics also changed drastically. During this same

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<sup>27</sup>Berghahn, Modern Germany, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup>Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 200.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 202.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 199.

period Germany's urban population nearly tripled.<sup>31</sup> The social ramifications of this industrial and population transformation were enormous. Skilled artisans and craftsmen found themselves competing against mass production. The established middle class felt threatened by the political agitation of the working class. Conservative elites feared the loss of power and status in an ever faster changing world.

In an extremely class conscious society the danger of losing social position fractured an already divided country. The government worsened this situation with its commitment to the monarchical order. The rise of mass politics would also upset the traditional political order, overshadowing the moderate and liberal voices of incremental change. New, more radical parties demanded immediate reforms, having no patience for the old political process they viewed with contempt. This collision between old and new is where radical nationalism emerges.

#### **D. POLITICAL PARTIES**

By 1890, Germany's regional, political, social, and confessional differences were still as strong as when the Empire was founded. Many Bavarians considered Prussians overly militaristic and authoritarian, while certain Prussians tended to perceive Bavarians as soft and

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 200.

unreliable. The political parties of the day reflected this sectionalism. The Centre Party held the most seats in the Reichstag in 1890 with 106 out of a total of 397.<sup>32</sup> A predominately Catholic party, the Centre catered to Catholic interests and had its basis of support in southern Germany, primarily Bavaria. Due to Bismarck's ill conceived government attack on the Catholics in the 1870s (Kulturkampf), the Catholic community felt threatened by the Protestant north and militaristic Prussia.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, they joined together, committed against a stronger central government.

The National Liberals represented the interests of a wide range of society, from industrialists to workers, from farmers to artisans.<sup>34</sup> Notables, members of professions and non-nobility, filled the positions of importance in the party, appointing from within, and keeping voices of change outside. The Party's main platform, the creation of a liberal German state, lost momentum with Bismarck's military successes. Many National Liberals supported Bismarck, believing that reforms could be instituted in time, until he turned on them in 1879. By 1890, the National Liberals were in decline. Reichstag seats plummeted from ninety-nine in

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<sup>32</sup>Eley, Reshaping the German Right, p. 365.

<sup>33</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 75.

<sup>34</sup>Karl Rohe, ed., Elections, Parties and Political Traditions, Social Foundations of German Parties and Party Systems, 1867-1987, (New York: Berg Publishers Ltd, 1990), p. 39.

1887 to forty-two in 1890.<sup>35</sup> In a period of increasing political polarization, the party's once diverse support turned to other more modern parties. The lack of a coherent platform and the leadership of an old guard of Notables who were slow to change, also contributed to the party's decline. The National Liberals also failed to exploit the new opportunities of mass media in building popular support. This would have fateful consequences for the liberal ideals until 1945.

The Social Democratic Party proved to be the most successful in its electoral support between 1890 and 1912. Changing demographics, from rural to urban, led by increased industrialization and a population explosion, contributed to growing social tensions between those doing well and those feeling oppressed or disoriented. The working class in general perceived big business and the wealthy as exploiters. Until labor unions became stronger and labor reforms were enacted, this was generally true. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) represented the working class. In 1890 the Social Democrats won thirty-five seats in the Reichstag, twenty-four more than 1887.<sup>36</sup> By 1912 the SPD became the single most powerful party in the Reichstag with 110 out of 397 seats.<sup>37</sup> The actual number of votes was much

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<sup>35</sup>Eley, Reshaping the German Right, p. 365.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p. 365.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p. 365.

higher, but the electoral districts favored the rural areas over the cities. The SPD received most of its support from the large industrial centers.

The Conservative Bloc consisted of basically two parties: the German Conservative Party, and the Free Conservative Party or Reich Party.<sup>38</sup> Political support came from the land owners, heavy industry, state bureaucrats, and the military. Slow to adapt to the emerging world of mass politics, the Conservative Bloc suffered as much as the National Liberals by 1912. In 1890 the Conservatives gained twenty-six seats less than in 1887.<sup>39</sup> The 1912 election left the entire Conservative Bloc with only fifty-seven seats, down from ninety-three seats in 1890.<sup>40</sup> This trend would provoke a panic in the political right.

There were other political parties during this period. Most represented narrow interests and only played a marginal role. Minority parties of Poles, Danes, Alsations, and Lorrainers had a combined total of twenty-seven seats in 1890.<sup>41</sup> They would gain one seat by 1912. Anti-semitic parties and other particularists went from seven seats in 1890 to thirty-three in 1908, and back down to nineteen in

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<sup>38</sup>Rohe, Elections, Parties and Political Traditions, pp. 40-41.

<sup>39</sup>Eley, Reshaping the German Right, p. 365.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

1912.<sup>42</sup> These parties represented the fringe element of German politics, yet their racist ideas would find fertile ground in the bewildered postwar Germany, looking for scapegoats.

The Left Liberals were not as marginal, yet saw their position eroded in time. From a high of seventy-six seats in 1890 to a low forty-two in 1912, the Left Liberals mirrored the decline of the National Liberals and the Conservatives.<sup>43</sup> The only parties to have substantial numbers of seats in the Reichstag in 1912 were the Centre Party with ninety-one, and the Social Democratic Party at 110 out of a total of 397.<sup>44</sup>

The Social Democrats were not as powerful as their number of seats would suggest. Their radical Marxist, socialist agenda put them at odds with nearly all other parties. The Centre Party gained the most from the fears of socialism. With a steady showing in the elections, the Centre became the leader in forming coalitions which could overcome the factionalism of the Reichstag, and pass legislation. The government, conservatives, and national pressure groups feared that socialism would win unless something drastic was done to stem the tide.

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

## **E. TRANSFORMATION OF THE RIGHT**

The 1890s saw a rise in the number of national pressure groups and memberships. The Pan German League, Colonial Society, Navy League, and later the Defense League, were the major organizations. All groups espoused patriotism and nation before all. There existed a strong dislike for political compromises on issues viewed as of national importance. Contempt for the Reichstag dominated in the minds of many members and leaders. In the beginning all of these organizations strongly supported the government and monarchy.

In the early stages, pressure groups viewed their primary role as educational, covering such important issues, as colonies, a stronger navy, or the preservation of German culture. The government rarely received any criticism from the national pressure groups. Many people saw their mission as the protection of the establishment from the growing dangers of the left. If the average worker could be taught the importance of nationalism, a strong navy, and imperial ambitions, then he could be saved from the radical left. The national pressure groups launched active campaigns of education and propaganda. However, most members of these agitational organizations were from the middle class.

Such events as the Boer War, the Daily Telegraph Affair of 1908, and the Moroccan Crisis of 1911, worked to push the national pressure groups into opposition to government



policies.<sup>45</sup> After Bismarck's retirement, Germany's diplomatic situation deteriorated. Russia and France signed a formal treaty of alliance in 1894. France and Britain moved closer together with an "Entente Cordiale" in 1904, resolving their colonial disagreements.<sup>46</sup> Germany appeared to be encircled. These foreign policy failures were attributed, in part, to the Kaiser's dabbling in areas which should have been left to the Chancellor's office. The growing threat from the left was also blamed on government ineptitude. What had been tacit support or "accommodation" of the conservative elites by the middle class, became open antagonism on the eve of the First World War. This situation only splintered the political scene further in Germany, making any consensus building nearly impossible.

As the nation's wealth became less dependent on agriculture, the political system's bias towards landed interests came under assault. Tax exemptions and tariffs which benefited the gentry caused agitation among the growing middle class, which had become politically conscious due to the rise of mass media. Most taxes fell disproportionately on the middle class. Yet, the middle class remained fractured on several issues, as well as along regional and confessional lines. The power of the pressure groups came from their appeal to broad national issues. By

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, p. 364.

<sup>46</sup>Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, p. 283.

claiming goals greater than petty sectionalism, these groups set out to "save" the country from perceived internal and external enemies.

The national pressure groups departed from their educational tradition to focus instead on mobilizing political support for the conservatives during the 1907 campaign. This step led to a temporary defeat of the Social Democrats. Co-opted by the government and conservative elites to fend off the left, the government soon found it difficult to accommodate the growing demands of the radical right.

The conservative right had always feared extreme nationalism. The thought of masses of people being mobilized for a cause which could get out of control was unnerving. Bismarck had used nationalistic appeals and exhortations effectively. Others tried to emulate his successes. Thus, the conservative right appealed to a sense of duty, loyalty and pride as a political weapon against the growing radical left, but lost control to a new generation of extreme nationalists.

Pressure groups who worked with and in support of the government on issues of naval power, colonies, and cultural education, found it more and more difficult to continue because of foreign policy failures, disagreement on issues such as what types of ships to be built, the size of the navy, and the strength of the army. In addition, there

existed a growing antagonism between the burgeoning self-conscious middle class and the interests of the landed elite. It was only a matter of time before leaders of nationalist pressure groups would break-out to form new parties based on broad appeals to national interests, even though many in the organizations believed politics to be a dirty business and could not understand compromising on issues of national security importance.<sup>47</sup>

#### **F. POWER OF IDEAS**

The rise of German nationalism, whether fueled by the pressure groups, or simply channeled, must be viewed in the context of the period. Germany was not alone in experiencing this surge of national egotism. The United States claimed its "Manifest Destiny," and in 1898 entered the world scene as a major power with its defeat of Spain and the addition of overseas colonies to its possessions.<sup>48</sup> France had turned its energies towards Africa after its defeat in 1871. Great Britain continued its empire building and demonstrated strong nationalistic tendencies when dealing with the Muhjadin in the Sudan, the Chinese, and the Boers.<sup>49</sup> When the Russian Baltic fleet inadvertently sank a

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<sup>47</sup>Eley, Reshaping the German Right, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth Hagan, This People's Navy, (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 207-227.

<sup>49</sup>Byron Farwell, Queen Victoria's Little Wars, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), pp. 330-353.

couple of British fishing boats, the nation's press and public called for war and the destruction of the Russian fleet. As it turned out, the Russian fleet met its end at the hands of the Japanese in the Battle of Tsushima in 1905.<sup>50</sup> The dawn of the "Rising Sun" had arrived. Russian Pan-Slavism called for the protection of all slavs in the Balkans, at the expense of the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empires. This explosion of virulent nationalism gripped most major nation states between the 1870's and the First World War.

Social Darwinism also played an important role in shaping ideas of the time. According to it, only the strong nations would survive and flourish, and lesser peoples would disappear or be subjugated by the fittest. The power of these ideas, national identity, self-determination, and Social Darwinism can not be underestimated. Coupled with unprecedented changes in social demographics and the introduction of mass media, these ideas were used to manipulate and mobilize millions of people. The conservatives elites wanted to maintain their position of power in an ever faster changing world. By alienating the workers, these attitudes and actions appeared to aid the extreme left. Consequently, the new radical right demanded changes which set itself as odds with the conservative right.

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<sup>50</sup>Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, p. 277.

Memberships in the National Pressure Groups steadily rose from 1890 to the outbreak of war in 1914. For example, the Navy League began in 1898 with 14,252 members. By 1914, it claimed 331,493.<sup>51</sup> If one counted all organizations affiliated with the Navy League, over one million people were involved.<sup>52</sup> The Navy League was the largest of such pressure groups. These massive non-traditional organizations of broad appeal exerted enormous political pressure without being subject to the politics of the Reichstag.<sup>53</sup>

Intensive nationalistic rivalries between the states of Europe, Social Darwinism, and the notion of national destiny, were, in part, outlets for the mounting internal social pressures caused by rapid industrialization and urbanization. New technology allowed mass media, creating political awareness never before known. The political scene of Germany reflected the fracturing of society. None of the old class divisions accurately reflected the emerging social order.

New industrial elites began to exert political influence. The middle class expanded to encompass the growing numbers of white collar workers and administrators. Fueled by modern ideas of Marxists and socialists, the

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<sup>51</sup>Eley, Reshaping of the German Right, p. 366.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, p. 366.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, p. 57.

expanding working class began to unite for the common purpose of overthrowing the old order. Young and restless, Germany, wielded great military and industrial might. With its internal divisions and social\political tensions it was fast becoming a danger to itself and the European order.

#### **G. THE COMING STORM**

A grave, indeed fatal, political crisis loomed over Germany in the final years before the First World War. An already fractured and sectional political system grew increasingly divided. The traditional conservative elites found themselves under assault from both the left and the right. The new radical right had taken the ideas used by Bismarck before the 1890s to rally support against the left, and pushed them to new extremes. The national pressure groups sewed the seeds of mass political parties. Using modern technology for printing and distributing information and propaganda, including motion pictures, they created a mass political awareness which broke past regional, confessional and sectional differences.

The clash between old and new, status-quo and change, threatened the autocratic powers of the Kaiser and Prussia's dominance in the Reich's federation. The government's juggling act of forming coalitions and using foreign policy diversions to gain consensus could not continue. A relatively peaceful transition of power between conservative

ruling forces and parliamentarians may have occurred within a few years of 1912, but the constitution's structure made this difficult, and would have required that ruling elites willingly give up their power. Wolfgang Mommsen captured the essence of the political crisis:

The causes of the First World War must be sought not in the blunders and miscalculations of the governments alone, but in the fact that Germany's governmental system, as well as Austria-Hungary's and Russia's, was no longer adequate in the face of rapid social change and the steady advance of mass politics.<sup>54</sup>

The government and army perceived an eminent civil war. Events in the Balkans seemed to offer an opportunity to check this trend, at least temporarily.

Gavrilo Princep's assassination of the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, in Sarejevo on 28 June 1914,<sup>55</sup> has been called the "spark" which set the "tinder box" afire. Tensions in Europe had been on the rise for over a decade. The Anglo-German naval arms race had pushed Great Britain towards France and Russia. Germany's only strong ally, Austria-Hungary, found itself constantly at odds with Russia in the Balkans. France, recovered from the humiliating defeat of 1871, sought to regain the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid, p. 293.

<sup>55</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 334.

Each country perceived that a quick military victory would be possible and desirable. France believed that, with the aid of powerful Russia in the east and Great Britain in the west, it could regain its prestige and importance in Europe. Russia, still reeling from the military defeat of the 1905 Russo-Japanese War and the internal revolution that followed, hoped to turn back progressive liberalism and solidify its position in the Balkans.<sup>56</sup> Great Britain felt the strains of meeting a challenge to its global Empire. A chance to defeat the German naval threat before it could grow too powerful appealed to many British imperialists.<sup>57</sup> The Austro-Hungarian Empire, a diverse collection of ethnic nationalities with growing internal tensions, viewed the war as a chance to block the Russian and Pan-Slavic threat to parts of its Empire.

In the conservative tradition of dealing with domestic problems with foreign policy diversions, the prospects of a victorious war to slow down or reverse "progressive" tendencies appealed to Germany's Chancellor, Bethman-Hollweg. In addition, Germany's past foreign policy blunders had led to virtual encirclement, something the great Bismarck had always worked hard to avoid. Germany's only real ally, Austria-Hungary, looked weaker and weaker

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<sup>56</sup>Bond, War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970, pp. 72-98.

<sup>57</sup>Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914, pp. 441-463.



every year. Confronted with yet another crisis in the Balkans, Germany had the choice of either backing down from supporting Austria-Hungary, or giving its full support. Declining to support Austria-Hungary would likely have led to Vienna's demise or defection to Germany's enemies.

The growing radical right would view either course as a foreign policy disaster, and attack the government. By supporting the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkan crisis, it was hoped that a weakened Russia would back down, as it had in 1909, and possibly break the entente or at least enhance Germany's position in the Balkans, in Europe, and at home.<sup>58</sup> Another dimension was the German General Staff's perceptions of Russia's growing military power. With French investments, loans and grants, Russia had embarked on a vast modernization program. New railroads were constructed into Poland and western Russian territory, increasing the country's military mobilization capabilities.<sup>59</sup>

The German military viewed these developments with apprehension. Germany's plans to successfully fight a two-front war by attacking France with overwhelming force first and achieve quick victory, and then transferring forces to the eastern front, would become obsolete in a few years.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Hillgruber, Germany and the Two World Wars, pp. 22-40.

<sup>59</sup>Kennan, The Decline of Bismarck's European Order, pp. 379-397.

<sup>60</sup>Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914, pp. 430-431.

Consequently, there were those in the General Staff who advocated war in 1914, before the correlation of forces could turn against Germany.<sup>61</sup> Bethman-Hollweg faced these real and perceived dangers in the fateful summer of 1914. In the end, he gave Germany's unconditional support to Austria-Hungary. Perhaps a greater person would have acted differently. Unfortunately for Germany and Europe, the course was set for war.<sup>62</sup>

Bethman-Hollweg's gamble initially appeared to fail and succeed at the same time. Russia declared war on Austria-Hungary, obliging Germany to declare war on Russia. Conflict became unavoidable, and because the chancellor had no control over the military, events quickly got out of his hands. Domestically, the unifying force of the pending war seemed to end the political crisis. Even the Social Democrats supported the government in the war effort. Mass enthusiasm for seemed to make the war worthwhile, as long as it was quick and successful.

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<sup>61</sup>Hillgruber, Germany and the Two World Wars, pp. 22-40.

<sup>62</sup>Note: For more information on the causes of the First World War, refer to: Gordon A. Craig, Germany, 1866-1945. (See previous citation) Andreas Hillgruber, Germany and the Two World Wars, translated by William C. Kirby, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

George F. Kennan, The Decline of Bismarck's European Order, Franco-Russian Relations, 1875-1890. (See previous citation)

Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914, Atlantic Highlands: The Ashfield Press, 1980.

Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. (See previous citation)

## H. THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The German Army's autonomy from civilian control nearly wrecked Bismarck's plans in the 1866 war against Austria-Hungary, and the 1870-1871 war against France. In both occasions the military pushed for goals which ran contrary to Bismarck's political objectives. In each case Bismarck eventually prevailed, though not without difficulty. Ironically, the country which had produced the great military thinker Clausewitz, did not heed his dictum that "war is simply the continuation of politics or policies by other means." Once war began, the military implemented its war plans, drawn up in form since Count Schlieffen designed them in 1905.<sup>63</sup> Rigid and inflexible they did not take into consideration political concerns or objectives. The war became all or nothing, unlimited in scope, completely out of the civilian politicians' control.

The industrial changes which affected society also transformed war itself. Mass production, transportation and communication allowed nearly complete mobilization of a country's human and material resources. Command and control allowed for fairly effective deployments of armies with millions of troops. The consequences were enormous and quite unforeseen by most. Instead of a quick war of maneuver, World War I, "The Great War," proved to be a struggle of exhaustion.

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<sup>63</sup>Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, p. 283.

The war lasted four long years, claiming millions of lives, and ending three of Europe's greatest imperial dynasties- Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. During the war, the extreme right advocated ambitious war aims for the country. With the loss of overseas colonies, Germany looked to the east to build a continental Empire, free from the economic pressure of Britain, America, and France. The costs of the war in human life and resources fed progressively more ambitious demands. The inclusion of Belgium and areas in occupied France, Poland, the Baltic states and much of the Ukraine were added to the list. The virtual military dictatorship of Field Marshal Hindenburg and Ludendorff supported these aims.<sup>64</sup>

By 1918, Germany's military had obtained almost all of the war aims, except that the western allies would not agree. Russia, racked with revolution, bowed out of the war, relinquishing vast areas of the Empire. Freed from the war in the east, Germany transferred troops to the western front. Ludendorff devised a plan to separate the French and British Armies, and force the British from the continent before the United States could make its presence felt on the battlefield. Spectacular success followed the offensive of March of 1918, with the German army making the greatest gains in the west since the first months of the war. The war appeared to be going in German's favor.

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<sup>64</sup>Andreas Hillgruber, Germany and the Two World Wars, p. 44.

With news of these late successes of the war, it is understandable how shocked the general public was when it learned that the Kaiser had abdicated, a new government had formed, and a peace treaty was being negotiated. The German Army did not appear to be beaten on the battlefield, though it had been at Ludendorff's request that the Government sued for peace. The army's "stab in the back" myth was born.<sup>65</sup> With the end of the war, a new Republic was formed in Germany. Unfortunately, the pre-war political crisis had not been resolved. The war only acted to increase differences and fracture the older parties. In addition to the turmoil caused by defeat in war, the new Weimar Republic inherited the pre-war political confrontation. The millions of young men, scarred by the horrors of modern war, returning from the battlefields, would constitute another divisive force on Germany's political landscape.

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<sup>65</sup>Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, p. 22.

### III. DEMOCRACY FALLS TO NATIONAL SOCIALISM: 1918-1945

#### A. THE REPUBLIC IS FOUNDED

The allies' refusal to deal with the Kaiser's government and the military dictatorship of Ludendorff and Hindenburg in October 1918, helped strengthen domestic agitation for political reforms. The conservative elites and many from the political center hoped to save the monarchical institution with the creation of a constitutional monarchy such as Great Britain's. However, an uprising, starting in the naval ports, quickly spread throughout Germany. The Kaiser, forced to abdicate, fled to Holland. The Social Democrats were willing to compromise with the middle class parties on the idea of a constitutional monarchy, yet the extreme left elements of the SPD agitated for a socialist revolution similar to the Bolshevik upheaval in Russia.<sup>66</sup>

Out of this political chaos emerged a new Social Democratic government, determined to work with the old middle class parties in the formation of a new constitution. The SPD acted as a moderating force in its desire to return

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<sup>66</sup>Note: for more information on the founding of the Weimar Republic, please see;

Detlev J. K. Peukert, The Weimar Republic, translated by Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987).

Craig, Germany, 1866-1945.

Rosenberg, The Birth of the German Republic, 1871-1918.

to "normalcy."<sup>67</sup> The first postwar election to the Reichstag was held in 1919. The results did not give any one party a majority in the Reichstag. Once again, the formation of coalitions became necessary to pass any legislation. The Centre, Liberal, and Conservative Parties banded together to form a coalition against the SPD and more extreme left.

The loss of the war, the shock of the Kaiser's abdication, and the domestic chaos temporarily weakened the conservative and extreme right forces in Germany. Stripped of colonies and limited to a small navy and army, Germany's national pressure groups had few of their traditional platforms from which to agitate on. Most members and groups leaders turned to politics. The Weimar Republic under Friedrich Ebert, a moderate Social Democrat, found itself dependent on the institutions and structures of the Empire.<sup>68</sup> Real and perceived dangers from the extreme left, notably the Spartakist uprising in 1919-20, forced the new government to rely on the Army.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, the Army, a bastion of conservatism, remained autonomous. The Versailles Treaty inadvertently helped the Army maintain its conservative core by limiting it to 100,000 men, thus

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<sup>67</sup>John Hiden, ed., Germany and Europe, 1919-1939, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman Publishing, 1993), pp.36-41.

<sup>68</sup>Peukert, The Weimar Republic, pp. 17,30,33,228.

<sup>69</sup>Holborn, A History of Modern Germany, pp. 526-531.

encouraging the preservation of a small but very dedicated and loyal officer corps.<sup>70</sup>

The bureaucracy, the education system, and the church maintained their conservative orientation. The Republic never managed to purge these institutions, perhaps because of the internal instability and constant change of power from one cabinet to the next never allowed for much continuity in policy. The end result was that all of the institutions which help strengthen and support a government remained arch conservative, with most of them yearning for a return of the monarchy.<sup>71</sup>

The founding of the Republic brought major electoral reforms. The Prussian three-class voting system was abolished,<sup>72</sup> as were the electoral district laws which had favored the sparsely populated rural country. Instead, parties received proportional representation in the Reichstag based on the number of votes won. Unfortunately, this helped foster even greater political splintering, because any new party or particularist organization could likely win a few seats. The system still favored the established parties, yet it did not attempt to build any bonds between voters and parliament representatives. Members of the Reichstag still received their seats from the

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<sup>70</sup>Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army, p. 367.

<sup>71</sup>Craig, Germany, 1866-1945, pp. 417-425.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.



party rather than the voters. Consequently, there still existed a lack of personal responsibility to constituents. The masses only participated in the political process by voting for a certain party. Once the election was over, there were few venues for continued active political involvement, except when national referendums were held.

The power structures underwent some major changes. The Reichstag became the primary seat of power with the ability to initiate new legislation. The Chancellor and his cabinet became responsible to the parliament. Constitutional changes had to pass the Reichstag with a two-thirds vote, nearly impossible in the diverse and fractured political scene. The Bundesrat, now Reichsrat, became a mere mouthpiece for state interests.<sup>73</sup> Seats were filled by the states' governing party. The states managed to keep a great deal of autonomy until 1930. The most powerful position in Germany was the office of the President.

Perhaps with nostalgia for the past, the President's powers were not unlike those of the Kaiser. The President appointed the Chancellor, commanded the army, and had special emergency powers under Article 48 of the Constitution. Intended to be a safeguard for protecting the fragile democracy, Article 48 allowed the Chancellor to rule by emergency decree through the approval of the President. In view of the domestic unrest of 1918-1919, the attempted

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid, p. 419.

communist revolution, and the revolution in Russia, one can understand why the authors of the constitution gave extraordinary power to the President. After all, the President was elected by the people, and sworn to support the constitution. Ironically, without the powers of Article 48, the Republic could not likely survive the political chaos, yet it was Article 48 which allowed the Republic to be destroyed.<sup>74</sup>

## **B. POLITICAL PARTIES**

The political parties of postwar Germany reflected the continued radicalization of politics, exacerbated by the loss of the war and the ensuing economic and political chaos. New parties emerged on both extremes. They were more militant, and they were determined to force change in their favor. Unwilling to compromise, these fringe parties only added to the confusion, and disrupted the already difficult task of returning stability to Germany. Once it became obvious that the moderate center parties could not handle the growing problems, the polarization of the political scene between extreme left and right became greater, drawing off support from the center.

On the left, the Social Democrats were no longer the extreme party. Division over the SPD's role in supporting the war and on the post war reforms, led to secession of the

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<sup>74</sup>Berghahn, Modern Germany, p. 93.

Independent Socialists Party (USPD).<sup>75</sup> Further on the left were the communists who aspiring for a "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Communist Party of Germany (KPD) would grow from a mere four seats in the 1920 Reichstag to seventy-seven in 1930 out of a total of 452.<sup>76</sup> The political left continued to predominantly represent the working class.<sup>77</sup>

In response to perceived and perhaps real dangers of the left, the radicalization of the right became even greater. Hitler's National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP), founded in 1920, came to represent the extreme right, absorbing other radical nationalist parties and organizations by 1932.<sup>78</sup> In 1920, the NSDAP was an obscure Bavarian fringe group. After the failed Hitler/Ludendorff Beer Hall Putsch in Bavaria in 1923, Hitler set about to build the Party into a mass organization. The results were impressive. In 1928 the NSDAP only gained twelve seats in the Reichstag, but by 1930, the Nazis claimed an astounding 107 seats.<sup>79</sup> The 1932 elections further increased the

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<sup>75</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 433.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid, p. 452.

<sup>78</sup>The German National People's Party (DNVP) disbanded in 1933, many members joining the NSDAP, Berghahn, Modern Germany, pp. 126-127. for more information on the DNVP see; Lewis Hertzman, DNVP, Right-Wing Opposition in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1924, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).

<sup>79</sup>Berghahn, Modern Germany, p. 112.

strength of the NSDAP with a jump to 230 seats in the Reichstag, almost one half of the total.<sup>80</sup>

Support for the Nazi party came primarily from the middle class.<sup>81</sup> Though the party claimed to be a "Workers Party," support from the working class remained minor. Those who avidly joined the national pressure groups in pre-war years, now flocked to the banner of the Nazis. In that sense, the NSDAP reflected the trend established in the 1890's: a class conscious, status oriented middle class felt threatened by the prospects of a workers revolution. The growing industrialization of the German economy, economic disaster and hyper-inflation in 1923, and the collapse of the world economy beginning in 1929, compounded the situation.

The small farmers, shopkeepers, craftsmen, and artisans of Germany saw their survival being threatened by the forces of change, and not surprisingly fell victim to the propaganda and promises of Hitler's party. As John Breuilly states:

It was not specifically Nazi components of his (Hitler's) (anti-semitism, race-centered nationalism. the drive for living space in the east) which appealed so much as the belief that he and his party had a better chance than most (and at

least deserved and opportunity) of creating a strong

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<sup>80</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 562.

<sup>81</sup>Hans Speier, German White Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. xiii, 3, 69-79.

government which would tackle the problems besetting Germany.<sup>82</sup> When it became obvious to the more moderate conservative right that Hitler's party was the dominant political force besides the SPD and the KPD, they attempted to co-opt Hitler, only to be co-opted themselves. The industrial elites waited until the end, but preferred Hitler's right-wing politics to the social reforms of the left.

The traditional political parties became weaker after each major crisis which confronted the state. Initially, in 1919, the political scene superficially looked very similar to the one before the war, with the exception of name changes and minor splintering. By 1930 however, the moderate parties were all very weakened, especially the progressive and liberal parties of the German Democratic Party (DDP) and the German Peoples Party (DVP), formerly the National Liberals. The conservative German National People's Party (DNVP) and the Conservative People's Party suffered also, as did the Centre and Bavarian People's Party (BVP).

The combined percentage of voters for all of these parties in 1930 was only 40.8%, far from a majority. The Social Democrats remained the largest party with 24.6% of the votes. The Nazi Party was not far behind with 18.3%. The communists held 13.1% of the vote. Two years later the situation became impossible for the voices of moderation.

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<sup>82</sup>John Breuilly, ed., The State of Germany, p. 16.

At that time the combined vote for the above mentioned coalition parties plummeted to 25.7%, while those cast for the NSDAP doubled to 37.3%.<sup>83</sup>

### **C. FORCES OF RADICALIZATION**

Numerous factors contributed to the political radicalization of Germany during the twenties and early thirties. Only three major ones are explored here. First, it has already been mentioned that the social changes resulting from industrialization left vast segments of the population disorientated or disenchanted with their worsening political and social situation. Second, the experience of the First World War and the imposition of the humiliating Versailles Treaty, combined to give the forces of the right political ammunition in their campaign to find scapegoats for Germany's ills. The economic crises of 1923 and 1929 contributed greatly to the radicalization of German politics. The hyper-inflation of 1923 wiped out small businessmen, artisans, craftsmen, small farmers, and family savings. Gordon Craig has described this process as follows:

The failure of the first German experiment with republican government was foreordained when the one commodity that more than any other seemed to give people a means of rational assessment of their situation lost its power to do so any longer. For millions of Germans, that unprecedented and bewildering event (inflation of '23) hopelessly compromised faith in representative government and encouraged the growth

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<sup>83</sup>Berghahn, Modern Germany, p. 113.

of messianism and utopianism. The beneficiary of that transformation of values was Adolf Hitler.<sup>84</sup>

The Republic managed to overcome the crisis of 1923, yet the political radicalization of the left and right was already nearly complete. When the world's economy failed in 1929, these extreme forces were ready to take advantage of the situation.

Far from healing the wounds caused by the First World War, the Versailles Treaty opened new ones and condemned Europe and the world to the prospects of future conflict. When the German government first requested an armistice, it believed that the negotiations would be governed by American President Wilson's magnanimous "Fourteen Points." Instead, the allies forced a unconditional *Diktat* upon the Germans.

The French were eager to strip Germany of any capacity to threaten France again. Germany lost Alsace-Lorraine back to France, parts of its eastern territory to Poland, and minor territorial sections to Denmark and Belgium.

Germany's armed forces were seriously limited, making Germany one of the weakest military powers in Europe. The once proud High Sea fleet was scuttled. Germany could not build submarines or warships greater than 10,000 tons.

Limited to 100,000 men, the German Army was forbidden from building tanks. Nor could the Germans form an air force.

All of Germany's overseas colonies were taken, as was the

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<sup>84</sup>Craig, The Germans, p. 121.

bulk of its merchant fleet.<sup>85</sup> As if these measures were not serious enough, the allies forced Germany to accept sole blame for the war and to agree to full compensation for damages and allied expenses in the war. Of course, had the Germans won the war, their terms would have been as harsh or harsher. The German Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Russia in 1917-18, stripped vast territory from the former Empire.

To the average German however, the Versailles Treaty was absurd and humiliating. Believing the propaganda of the war, the Germans saw themselves as the victims of Russian and French aggression. The army maintained it was not defeated on the battlefield, but by the loss of support on the home front. Thus the famous "stab in the back," by the "November criminals," became the political slogan of the far right and nationalist conservatives.<sup>86</sup>

Part of the Versailles Treaty called for reparation payments to the victors. In August 1919 the allies forced Germany to begin paying twenty billion gold marks, due by May 1921, when a reparations committee would report its recommendations for the total bill.<sup>87</sup> Germany had only 2.4 billion gold marks in its reserves. The Reparations Commission finally recommended that Germany pay a total of

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<sup>85</sup>Hidden, Germany and Europe, 1919-1939, pp. 20-31.

<sup>86</sup>Bracher, The German Dictatorship, pp. 34,66,97.

<sup>87</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 437.



132 billion gold marks.<sup>88</sup> Germany eventually managed to avoid this, but not without destroying its financial solvency and tolerating the French and Belgian occupation of the Saar industrial region.<sup>89</sup>

Germany's financial management of the war had been ill-conceived. Direct taxes on the wealthy and business profits were avoided in favor of reliance on war bonds and loans. With the loss of overseas trading, the merchant fleet, the imposition of enormous reparations payments, and, when the government defaulted, allied occupation of Germany's industrial heartland, Germany experienced hyper-inflation of unimaginable proportions. In July 1914, 4.2 marks equalled one United States dollar. Five years later the ratio was almost nine marks to the dollar. By November 1923 the figures were meaningless, 4.2 trillion marks to the dollar.<sup>90</sup>

Though the government eventually solved this crisis, millions of Germans remained financially bankrupt and psychologically scarred, resenting those who managed to make fortunes through speculating, and the politicians who seemingly allowed it to happen. When the American stock market crashed in October 1929, the impact was felt worldwide. In Germany unemployment jumped from 6.3 percent

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid, p. 439.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, p. 435.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid, p. 450.

in 1928, nearly 1.4 million, to 8.5 percent, 1.9 million, in 1929. The trend continued to worsen through 1930 and 1931 until it reached a staggering thirty percent unemployed, 5.6 million, in 1932.<sup>91</sup> It is likely that the memories of 1923 were still fresh in the minds of many. The massive unemployment of workers and middle class led to an increase in political violence from the left and the right. Hitler's party had been preparing for an opportunity such as this since 1923. The economic crisis which began in 1929 gave political ammunition to the Nazi Party, allowing it to play on millions of people's fears, anxieties, anger, and paranoia, reinforced by the memories of 1923. The political crisis which began in the 1890s was on the brink of civil war. Out of this chaos, Hitler would emerge as self-proclaimed savior.

#### **D. THE NAZI RISE TO POWER**

Given Germany's historical and political developments, coupled with the social and economic changes of the period, it is certainly not surprising that some form of right-wing extremism would emerge. As the above suggests, the process began back in the 1890s with distant roots going further back in time. The NSDAP represented only one variation of this political radicalization. The key difference was Hitler. Hitler's beliefs, goals, aspirations, and hates

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<sup>91</sup>Berghahn, Modern Germany, p. 284.

became intertwined with the party. Hitler declared that he was neither left nor right, but the most extreme embodiment of both. National Socialism embraced the radical concepts of Marxist\Leninism and the Pan-Germans. It is debatable whether the NSDAP would have ever left its humble beginnings in Munich without Hitler. With Hitler, an unimportant fringe movement became a mass party, used to gain complete control over the German nation.

Yet, Hitler did not invent National Socialism. Karl Dietrich Bracher had stated:

The German Workers' Party (Deutsche Arbeiter Partei, or DAP), which Hitler encountered in Munich in 1919, was certainly nothing new. Though its formation and growth were closely connected with the recent military defeat, and the revolutionary climate of 1918-19, it could not have come into being except for the intellectual, social, and political growth of Austro-German *voelkisch* nationalism. It was one of the numerous sectarian "anti" movements- anti-Semitic, anti-Western, anti-Slav- that accompanied Germany on the road to the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup>

The theoretical framework of National Socialism was written by Rudof Jung, a railroad engineer who joined the DAP in 1910. *National Socialism, Its development and Its Goals*, Jung hoped would be as important for National Socialism as Marx's *Das Kapital* was for socialism. According to Bracher:

Its point of departure was a lament over the destruction of German culture by foreign influences: modern civilization and "mammonism," wage labor and finance capital, liberal democracy and Marxism. Behind this process, Jung saw the forces of international Jewry seeking world domination,

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<sup>92</sup>Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, translated by Jean Steinberg (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p. 50.

forces which dominated capitalism and liberal democracy as well as Marxian socialism.<sup>93</sup>

The ground work was laid for National Socialism well before Hitler became interested in politics. When Hitler did seize on National Socialism, however, he molded it to fit his needs and aspirations.

Hitler, born in April 20, 1889 to lower middle class Austrian parents, was an unlikely candidate for supreme leader of all the Germans.<sup>94</sup> An aspiring artist, Hitler never made it into art school, which lead to dejection and frustration. In 1913, Hitler moved to Munich. It was in Munich where Hitler experienced the mass elation in August 1914 at the call to arms to defend the Reich against the Russian and French aggressors.

The war experiences transformed Hitler. The near constant danger of front line combat formed strong bonds of camaraderie between men, regardless of social standing. The war brought out the best and worst in people. Serving with distinction, Hitler received the Iron Cross (2nd class) for bravery, rare for a corporal. Recovering in a hospital after a gas attack, Hitler learned of Germany's surrender.<sup>95</sup> He later described it in his book, Mein Kampf, as one the

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid, p. 58.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid, p. 66.

blackest days of his life, and attributed it to his decision to enter politics and right the injustice done to Germany.

The roots of Hitler's anti-semitism have been attributed to his youthful days in Vienna, the cosmopolitan capital of the Hapsburg Empire. Virulent anti-semitism existed throughout Europe. Persecution of the Jews was ancient. Hitler did not have to look hard in the Vienna of the *fin-de-siecle*, to find all sorts of radical and bizarre ideas about Jews.<sup>96</sup> The tragedy was that Hitler took his anti-semitism to its extreme, making it state policy. The fact that Hitler ordered and approved the "Final Solution," demonstrates that Hitler was not simply using it as a political weapon. Racism and anti-semitism represented an integral part of Hitler's political agenda after he gained power.

In a cold, brutal logic, Hitler devised a solution to maintaining German racial purity. Many nationalists argued that annexations would only weaken the German blood and spirit. Hitler's plans called for building a continental empire, free from the economic pressures of Great Britain and the growing United States, and the extermination or deportation of people on the land to be claimed for Germans. The 1918 war aims of the Pan-Germans and Fatherland Party found their way into Hitler's foreign policy. Bent on

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid, p. 57.

achieving his continental empire, Hitler would plunge the world into the Second World War.

In order to restructure the European continent in his fashion, Hitler had to first obtain power in Germany. Initially, Hitler envisioned gaining the support of the working class. Uniting the strong German workers into a nationally invigorated community was Hitler's dream. He believed the middle class to be weak, cowardly, and materialistic. For him, the elite fell into two categories. Those who obtained their position in society through birth, Hitler held in contempt, whereas those who worked their way up to the top through hard work, determination and intelligence, Hitler respected. The latter fit into his ideas of survival of the fittest.

Hitler's Nazi ideology cannot be seen as simply radical right-wing. Hitler took ideas from all parts of the political spectrum. National Socialism consisted of building a new classless society in which success was open to anyone who could perform. A unique blend of capitalism with government planning would ensure that all were treated fairly, and that the best and the brightest could excel. Religion was to be supplanted by Nazi ideology, which would not tolerate degenerate art, literature, or behavior. Society was to be reborn on the pure and noble German cultural past, instead of the twisted liberal ideas of the West. The nation and the community would come first. In

this new society, the small farmers were to be respected and elevated in status for their historical bonds to the sacred German soil.

Ironically, Hitler realized that he needed to appeal to the status conscious and "morally weak" middle class in order to obtain his dreams. The support he had hoped for from the working class never materialized. After the 1928 elections, Hitler purposefully began to tone down his anti-semitism and expansionistic rhetoric. Instead, he tried to appeal to people's frustrations and fears over the economic crisis which began in 1929. Promising to rebuild Germany, put people back to work, and restore Germany's pride and prestige, Hitler touched the right chords.

The 1930 elections made the Nazi Party the second largest in the Reichstag. Two years later, it was the largest party in Germany. This was a major achievement, considering the sectionalism of German politics. Even so, sixty percent of the German voters did not support Hitler at the height of his political success. Of the social classes, 25 percent of all blue collar workers voted for the NSDAP, as did 29 percent of the white collar workers. Self-employed voters gave the greatest support, with 42 percent voting for the Nazis. This supports the observation that the industrial age placed great social and economic strains on the once prosperous and respected craftsmen and artisans.

The crises of 1923 and 1929 only worsened their plight, ruining many small businessmen and self-employed.

Hitler viewed the world and life in a rigid and unalterable way. A political genius who could work masses of people into hysteria with his oratorical skills, Hitler also possessed an uncanny ability to sense people's fears, anxieties, and hopes. Charismatic and intelligent, Hitler surrounded himself with loyal and dedicated people. Talented organizers and technicians helped Hitler create a mass party utilizing state of the art media to reach out and influence people. Massive party rallies awed those who attended with pageantry, discipline and special visual effects. Circumstances gave Hitler the opportunity to rise to power, but it was Hitler's ruthless political genius and timing which made it achievable.

#### **E. END OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC**

The story of Hitler's rise to power does not end with his electoral success in 1932. Though the Nazi party controlled the most seats, it did not have a clear mandate to run the country. Two-thirds of the Reichstag was required to make any constitutional changes. A combination of several factors allowed Hitler to gain power. Already, the conservative and moderate parties were ruling without a Reichstag majority through the emergency powers of the President. Hoping to tie Hitler to their needs and gain his



large base of support to combat the left, the conservatives underestimated Hitler's intelligence. Hitler realized this and capitalized on it. Hitler stated in 1932:

'The power is there,' they are saying. 'How would it be if we harnessed ourselves behind it.' They are gradually realizing that we National Socialists are a movement to be reckoned with, that I am a born tub-thumper, whom they can make good use of. Why should this brilliant movement, they think, with its drummer-boy, not also have brilliant field-marshalls. This drummer-boy is the only one who can drum up support; they themselves are the only ones capable of government. They all have 'von' in front of their names, the best proof of their capabilities.<sup>97</sup>

Believing they could control Hitler with the backing of the aging President Hindenburg, the elites gave Hitler his price for entering into a coalition government, the Chancellorship. Within fifteen months, Hitler consolidated his position. The death of Hindenburg in 1934, gave Hitler the chance to combine the offices of President and Chancellor into one, thus becoming the Fuehrer (leader) of the German people.

The Weimar Republic was not destined to fall. To say that democracy failed because there were not enough democrats is too simplistic. For fourteen years the Republic struggled to overcome enormous problems, which other Western nations faced with great difficulty. Germany's political transformation must be seen in the context of the period. The United States and Great Britain,

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<sup>97</sup>Ronald Smelser, and Rainer Zitelmann, ed., The Nazi Elite, translated by Mary Fischer (Washington Square: New York University Press, 1989, 1993(trans)), p. 120.

two long established democracies which had legitimacy and trust of the people, were also forced to intervene into people's lives on an unprecedented scale. The three-way struggle between the workers, the conservative elites, and the middle class, accentuated by industrialization, demographic change and the power of ideas made available through mass media, all worked to make Germany's political situation extremely volatile.

The First World War had only temporarily eased these tensions. Before the war was over, the struggle began again, soon to be aggravated by the additional burdens of a lost war, the Versailles Treaty, enormous reparations, the loss of territory, and humiliation. The new German Republic faced these challenges against the background of sectional, confessional, and class differences. The structural weakness of the political system, plus the entrenchment of the old order in the bureaucracy, army, judicial system, education, and church, all worked to undermine the legitimacy of the Republic and its ability to overcome periods of acute crises, such as the hyper-inflation of 1923, and the Great Depression beginning in 1929. In the end it was the conservatives who handed Hitler the reigns of power, believing they could control him and regain their lost power.

## **F. THE THIRD REICH AND THE SECOND WAR**

Although Hitler's "New Order" called for a classless society based on racial German values in a "national community," the old elites managed to cling to some of their power and status in the Third Reich. Industrial elites benefited during the early years of Hitler's rule. With unions abolished, labor agitation was redirected into Nazi controlled organizations which worked with industry. Rearmament and early conquests stimulated production and gave access to raw materials, yielding great profits.

The old conservative officer corps retained much of its control over the army, and gave its support to Hitler at the price of the elimination of the Storm Troopers' (SA) leadership, especially, Ernst Roehm in 1934. Hitler later tied the army to himself with a pledge of loyalty, sworn on their honor. Many levels of the state bureaucracy, from administrators to educators, remained in their positions after the Nazi seizure of power. Only those who did not give allegiance to Hitler, conform to Nazi policies, or who were "racially unfit", were forced to leave. Therefore, many of the old conservative elites and their supporters remained in positions of power and influence.

After the "July Plot" of 1944 to assassinate Hitler, failed, he lamented, "We have liquidated the left wing class warriors, but unfortunately in so doing we forgot to strike out to the right as well. That is our greatest sin of

omission."<sup>98</sup> Consequently, instead of a true totalitarian regime with a monolithic party at the controls, Germany resembled a feudal kingdom with various lords struggling to keep or expand their power at each other's expense. Yet, all owed allegiance and power to Hitler.

Inefficiency, overlapping jurisdiction and internal rivalries make Germany's war effort seem amazing. Hitler promoted this form of governing, for it pitted extremely ambitious people against each other and kept them separated, all looking to Hitler for favor and arbitration. Otherwise, Hitler feared they would connive against him and his position. This led to a contradiction in Nazi social policy and reality. Hitler's social and cultural revolution was never completed. The demands of the war forced Hitler to rely on old institutions and power elites. The result of this complex system of governing was the eventual backlash of public opinion. The Nazi Party and ruling Nazi elites were increasingly viewed with contempt and disgust. Duplicity and petty bickering between those in power made a mockery of the system. Subsequently, support for Nazism began to wane by 1943, especially after the news of defeat at Stalingrad.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>99</sup>Ian Kershaw, The Hitler Myth, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 188-195.

Nevertheless, Hitler's popularity managed to survive until the final months of the war. The average German believed that Hitler was not to blame for many of the war's misfortunes; the petty party officials and bureaucrats were the problem. The German defeat at Stalingrad in the winter of 1942-43, forced many people to realize that perhaps the war could not be won.<sup>100</sup> Still, people could not imagine that Germany would be conquered. Faith in Hitler remained high. His past successes conditioned the German people to believe that he was a genius and would somehow save Germany.

The final years of the war hardened people's attitudes towards the Nazi Party. The state frantically employed propaganda, intimidation and coercion to maintain the war effort. Many front-line soldiers fought on out of fear that the state would punish their families if they deserted or surrendered. The Allied bombing effort and the collapsing borders made state control over the masses difficult in the final year of the war. The last ditch efforts of the Party and state to defend the Reich through exhortations and propaganda of wonder weapons only left people more skeptical and disenchanted. There were still those who fought fanatically either for Hitler or for the defense of their homeland, but the majority simply wanted an end to the war.

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<sup>100</sup>Detlev J. K. Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 63.

Hitler's rise to power and the ensuing horrors of the Second World War, which no German could escape, marked a climax in the three way struggle between the growing number of blue collar workers, the middle class, and the old conservative elites. The majority of the middle class supported Hitler's party, yet it was the conservatives who handed Hitler the reigns of power. In this act they became accomplices to the Nazi crimes against humanity, destroying their cohesion as a group and consequently their power.

The devastation of the war in Europe is unimaginable today. By 1945, all major German cities were mere shadows of their former selves. The civilian casualties in Germany were estimated in the millions. No city greater than 50,000 people escaped bombing.<sup>101</sup> Berlin's population dropped thirty percent, with seventy-five percent of the buildings damaged or destroyed.<sup>102</sup> The conquering Soviet Army sought to avenge itself on the German citizens for the brutality and devastation Germans had wrought on Russians. Unlike the First World War, the German Army and people could not deny that they had been defeated. The physical occupation by British, American, and Soviet forces made the defeat utterly complete. The rounding up of Nazi elites and officials for war trials brought to light the truth of Germany's genocidal

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<sup>101</sup>Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, A History of West Germany: From Shadow to Substance, 1945-1963, Vo. I, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 30.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

actions during the war. The horrors of the concentration camps, the systematic murder of millions, and the true nature of Hitler's war of aggression came out for all to see.

Millions of Germans were forced from their homes in territory ceded to Poland and Russia. Lack of shelter, food, and other basic necessities, led to wide spread disease and death. Germany's economy was completely destroyed by the war. The black market became the only way to sustain oneself. Gordon Craig aptly summarizes Germany's situation.

Adolf Hitler was nothing if not thorough... Because his work of demolition was so complete, he left the German people nothing that could be repaired or built upon. They had to begin all over again, a hard task perhaps, but a challenging one, in the facing of which they were not entirely bereft of guidance. For Hitler had not only restored to them the options that they had had a century earlier but had also bequeathed to them the memory of horror to help them with their choice.<sup>103</sup>

Out of this chaos two different Germany's would emerge. Both broke with the past, determined to overcome the terrible consequences of the Third Reich.

The Allies' policy of breaking up the huge German industrial cartels eliminated the enormous political power of these elites. The loss of Germany's eastern territories destroyed the old conservative power base. Defeated and dishonored, the German Army no longer existed as a power in the state. Abolished by the victorious powers, it reemerged

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<sup>103</sup>Craig, Germany, p. 764.

in a new form, restructured and redesigned to uphold democracy in West Germany and Western Europe. The judicial and education system would take longer to transform, but the major obstacles to political reform in the past had been removed by the events of the Nazi rule, the war, and defeat. The task of rebuilding the country, coupled with mass migrations of people, helped break down particularist differences.

Nationalism and racism in any form were discredited by the Holocaust and Hitler's war. Life under the Nazi regime also helped in building common bonds. The division of Germany removed differences from the political scene. The old political parties of the past learned valuable lessons from the Weimar and Nazi experiences. In the western half of Germany, the second attempt at democracy was thus made on very different foundations than that of the Weimar Republic. Unfortunately for the east Germans, they had no choice in their form of government.



## **V. GERMANY DIVIDED: 1945-1990**

Until 1949, Germany remained occupied and without sovereignty or a national government. Reconstruction had begun, yet the scars of the war, both physical and mental, still pre-dominated. The "Grand Alliance" between the Western powers and the Soviet Union broke apart shortly after Germany's defeat. A new rivalry for influence and dominance in Europe began, pitting the two halves of Germany against each other. A divided Germany became the center of this new Super Power antagonism. Both Germanies became model allies for their respective blocs. Any future war in Europe would lead to German fighting German and result in the destruction of both halves of Germany. Fortunately, a shooting war never came and Germany was spared from becoming the battleground for Europe.

German politics in East and West Germany after 1945 developed in the shadows of the ideological struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the moral burden of the Second World War on the other. The fact that Germany remained divided for the duration of the Cold War demonstrates how powerful these forces were. Germany lost control of its destiny after World War II. Within a few years of the war's end, two independent states developed in Germany, and for 45 years the fate of both was

decided by the victors of Second World War. It took the end of the Cold War and the agreement between the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and France to reunite Germany.

The historical path which led to Hitler's Third Reich and Germany's defeat and occupation has been charted. In order to understand the problems confronting the reunited Germany today, it is necessary to explore the political, economic, and social developments after the Second World War. Though the West German Republic came to symbolize stability, there were times when people asked, "is Bonn Weimar?" Questions of democratic stability and viability in Germany today can only be answered by gaining an appreciation of how Germany has dealt with these problems in the past. The focus here will be on West Germany, since its political institutions emerged triumphant in reunification. However, understanding the challenges of assimilating sixteen million former communists into a democracy requires a look at East German developments also.

#### **A. A NEW REPUBLIC IN THE WEST**

Founded in 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany combined the three Zones of Western Allied Occupation into a single state. Viewed as a temporary measure until all of Germany could be reunited, West Germany's Basic Law (Constitution) reflected the commitment to rebuilding the

German nation state. Article 146 specifically addresses the reunification of Germany.<sup>104</sup> At the time, few could imagine that Germany would remain divided for 45 years. In contrast, those 45 years conditioned most in the east and west to accepting the division of Germany; though many remained hopeful that reunification would eventually happen, few imagined its occurrence in their lifetime.

The Basic Law of 1949 was a "temporary" constitution, yet, over time, it has come to symbolize stability, strength, and freedom. With a turbulent and bloody past, it is no wonder that most Germans view the Basic Law as sacred and the strongest pillar of democracy; few think of changing it, even after unification. The reason for such devotion is the fact that the Basic Law has given Germans in the West political stability unparalleled since the founding of the German Empire in 1871.

Having the benefit of recent history, the drafters of the Basic Law sought to overcome the weakness of the Weimar Constitution. Unlike the Weimar Constitution, the Basic Law has mechanisms which protect it from anti-democratic forces. A party found to be committed to the destruction of democracy can be banned. Since political parties must gain at least five percent of the vote in order to be represented in government, much of the splintering and chaos of the

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<sup>104</sup>Gert-Joachim Glaessner, The Unification Process in Germany, translated by Colin B. Grant (London: Printer Publishers Limited, 1992), p. 2.

Weimar political scene has been avoided. Maintaining some of the traditions of German parliamentary politics, some structures of the past were kept. Changes were made, however. Instead of parties simply filling all of their allotted seats in parliament according to rank in party and number of seats gained as a proportion of votes, one-half of the seats would now be filled by candidates who won directly in an election. With voters identifying with an individual to represent them, instead of simply a party, a sense of responsibility to the electorate develops.

Though the office of the President remained, its power was seriously limited. His control over the armed forces and emergency powers were stripped, leaving the him a figure-head of state. The Reichstag became the Bundestag with the majority party or coalition of parties forming the government centered around the Chancellor's office. After elections the President and party leaders choose a candidate for Chancellor. If one-half of the Bundestag approves this decision, then the President appoints the candidate Chancellor. If the candidate fails to receive 50 percent of the vote within fourteen days, a second candidate must be named by the Bundestag.<sup>105</sup> To ensure that obstructionist politics do no undermine the government, a "vote of no-

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<sup>105</sup>Bark and Gress, A History of West Germany, Vo. I, p. 250.

confidence" must be immediately followed by a vote on a successor.<sup>106</sup>

The Bundesrat (upper House) remained intact. Representing the interests of the *Laender* (states), its seats are filled by appointed delegates from each state. The number of seats each state gets depends on size and population. Constitutional amendments and any legislation which affects the states must be approved by the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat may oppose other legislation, however, the Bundestag can override it with a majority vote. If the Bundesrat is controlled by the opposite party legislation can be difficult, but the Bundestag can overcome this with enough votes. Any serious political deadlock would result in the President dissolving parliament and calling for new elections.

Founded on solid structures, West German democracy still had to overcome many other obstacles. Rebuilding the economy and cities, sheltering millions of refugees from all over Europe, Nazi war crimes, de-nazification, the physical division of Germany, and military occupation, were all major problems to contend with. At the same time, the division of Germany and the occupation may have helped in the establishment of a stable democracy. The occupying Allies outlawed any successor parties to the NSDAP. The war discredited extreme nationalism and racism, and the

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

establishment of a communist government in eastern Germany discredited communism for most West Germans, especially the brutal repression of the June 1953 revolt. Consequently, the extreme political elements were not as important in the beginning when democracy was most vulnerable.

## **B. POLITICAL PARTIES**

The first free elections since 1932 in West Germany were held in 1949. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) under Konrad Adenauer barely won a majority.<sup>107</sup> Under Adenauer's strong leadership West Germany quickly overcame the physical destruction of the war. His personal experiences of the Weimar years as Mayor of Cologne, and his differences with the Nazi regime made him an excellent choice for bringing Germany back into the community of nations. He witnessed the nature of Weimar's fractured political scene, and he did not sell out to the Nazis. West Germany owed him a great debt for his hard work and perseverance.

The CDU eventually became the successor to the Centre Party. Strong Catholic ties still existed, however, the CDU became a mass party, drawing support from all Christian denominations, and all parts of Germany. Predominantly middle class in orientation, the CDU also enjoyed support from big business, public servants and farmers. Adenauer's

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<sup>107</sup>Lewis J. Edinger, Politics in Germany, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1968), pp. 236-290.

success in gaining recognition from the West, alliances with the United States and NATO, and the economic recovery engineered by his economic minister, Ludwig Erhard, all made him extremely popular. The CDU capitalized on this until the party lost its majority to the resurgent Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1969.

At age 87, Adenauer succumbed to party pressure to step down in 1963.<sup>108</sup> Adenauer's success had been the party's success. Once Adenauer was gone, the party found itself lacking strong leadership. Nonetheless, the CDU\CSU (Christian Social Union of Bavaria) managed to maintain a consistent lead over the SPD in all elections except 1972. The decisive factor was the Free Democratic Party (FDP), which turned away from the CDU and sided with the SPD. From 1969 until 1983, the SPD\FDP coalition led West Germany. Then the FDP returned to the CDU\CSU in a coalition which has lasted to the present.

The 15 years of CDU\CSU rule were crucial for West Germany as it gave the country time to heal the scars of the war. The economic recovery helped build political stability. From the 17 parties which ran in the first Bundestag elections of 1949, 14 gained seats. By 1961, only four major parties were represented in the Bundestag, the

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<sup>108</sup>Bark and Gress, A History of West Germany, Vo. II, pp. 520-521.

CDU, the CSU, the FDP, and the SPD.<sup>109</sup> Though other parties have emerged since, some actually winning a few seats in the Bundestag, few have demonstrated any staying power. The Greens, an environmentalist party, and four extreme right-wing parties are detailed later.

The smooth transition of power between the two major parties, the CDU and the SPD, 1969, and 1983, proved the viability of West German democracy. The German voters had a choice between two strong and capable parties with differing yet moderate views. The competition between these two parties was healthy and necessary for democracy to adapt to changes in society.

The oldest political party in Germany, the SPD, underwent a major transformation during the early years of the West German Republic. A party of opposition, it drew most support from the working class. With an agenda for a "planned economy," and greater socialization, the middle class and business interests remained opposed to the SPD. The huge successes of the CDU in the early years forced the SPD leadership to rethink their political strategy. The "planned economy" was dropped from the platform in favor of a "social market economy" in line with the CDU. The more extreme elements of the party broke away, leaving a moderate

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<sup>109</sup>David P. Conradt, Unified Germany at the Polls: Political Parties and the 1990 Federal Election, German Issues 9, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1992, p. 2.



leadership which envisioned social change for the working class through small incremental victories.

The "Grand Coalition" between the CDU and the SPD from 1965 to 1969 helped change the image of the SPD. Instead of a radical party of revolution and socialism, the SPD became a mass party, working for all Germans on important issues. With interest in preserving the democratic order, the SPD demonstrated to the German people that it was an established party, concerned with and responsible for national needs.

The CDU's relative decline, economic difficulty, and the new image of the SPD, gave the Socialists their chance in 1969 to finally lead Germany. In coalition with the FDP, the SPD broke 15 years of CDU\CSU domination. The importance of this event can not be overstressed. Clearly, democracy proved it could work in Germany; the voters had two relatively balanced parties to chose from. For the supporters of the SPD, the victory reenforced their commitment to the party, thus alleviating possible resentment towards the political system. Experiencing the burden and satisfaction of governing, the SPD fully joined the process instead of remaining outside. This was a major step towards reconciling the political differences between the working class and the middle class.

The FDP has enjoyed more power than its size would suggest. Since 1949, the Party has been represented in 14

of 17 cabinets formed.<sup>110</sup> Never receiving more than 13 percent of the vote, the FDP has not won a seat by candidate since 1957. The "double" vote, Land lists have kept the party alive. In the tradition of Germany's past liberal parties, the FDP has emphasized civil liberties, education, and foreign and defense policy. The FDP tends to lean towards the SPD on these issues. On economic and trade related concerns however, the FDP is more in line with the CDU. Support for the FDP mainly comes from the Protestant middle class. Political scientist, David Conradt refers to the FDP loyalist as the "well-educated, affluent voter who wants a liberal corrective to the 'socialism' of the SPD and the 'clericalism' of the CDU."<sup>111</sup>

Uniquely positioned between the CDU and the SPD, the FDP has allowed the two major parties to govern without compromising their positions regarding each other. This has avoided possible political deadlock and crises. With its strong commitment to democracy, the FDP has played a significant role in bringing political stability to West Germany.

The fourth party to have longevity and a strong core of supporters is the CSU of Bavaria. A predominately regional party, the CSU represents Catholic and Bavarian interests. The largest state of the former West German republic and the

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

new Federal Republic of Germany, Bavaria retained most of its pre-war territory, culture, and with the dismemberment of Prussia, became the most powerful state in the federation. Considered the sister party of the CDU, the CSU has maintained a great deal of autonomy. Although differences between the CDU and the CSU have arisen, both parties remain close.

Under the long, stable rule of Franz-Joseph Strauss, the CSU dominated Bavarian politics from the 1950s until his death in 1988.<sup>112</sup> This was a major blow to the party, but it has continued to do well. Concerned with losing relative power in the CDU coalition and the Bundestag as a result of unification, the CSU has branched out into the new eastern states, especially Saxony, where it has helped found the German Social Union (DSU). Conservative and nationalistic in perspective, the CSU has fostered high technology industry in Bavaria, and has used its position in the CDU coalition to promote Bavarian interests. A strong, "well-organized mass-membership party," the CSU represents sectionalism in Germany.<sup>113</sup> This could pose a problem in the future if the major parties splinter into regional parties, thereby making coalition building difficult.

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<sup>112</sup>Russell J. Dalton, Politics in Germany, 2nd ed. (Irvine: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1993), pp. 288-289.

<sup>113</sup>David P. Conradt, Unified Germany at the Polls, p. 10.

With the German political scene coalesced around the CDU and SPD, and their "minor" partners CSU and the FDP, only a couple of other parties have broken the five percent barrier. They did not last long, however. Starting in the 1980s though, the political landscape began to splinter with the emergence of the Greens, the Republikaner, and the German Peoples Union.

Every decade since the end of the Second World War has had an outbreak of right-wing extremism in West Germany. The cyclical trend of the economy appears to be connected to the political changes witnessed. Perhaps memories of the Weimar years, or the economic chaos following the war, have left many Germans paranoid about their financial situation. Whenever the economic situation has worsened the coalitions have changed and the fringe parties have surged in popularity. The economy is not the only driving force, social change resulting from the continued industrialization has also played an important part.

### **C. SOCIAL CHANGE**

The pace of industrialization slowed in most parts of West Germany. Those areas which remained largely agricultural before the war, experienced the economic transformation. Bavaria is an example. In 1950, 30 percent of the work force was in agriculture; by 1985, this number

had dropped to eight percent,<sup>114</sup> as heavy industry and high technology became dominant.

Urbanization accompanied the industrialization. Refugees, immigrants, and young people looking for work, poured into West Germany's major cities. Unlike Wilhelmine Germany and the Weimar Republic, those who could not find work were protected by a growing welfare system. The social tensions resulting from greater urbanization were thus diffused by a more pro-active national government. The slower pace of industrialization and urbanization also helped.

During West Germany's 45 years of existence, the government worked closely with the financial and industrial leaders to overcome economic difficulties quickly, and to soften the blows of recession. Avoiding the debilitating effects of an economic depression was paramount. This cooperation worked well. The impact of recessions was minimized, and inflation was kept under control during periods of growth. Labor and industry agreed on mutually beneficial policies. Real wages for blue collar workers reached all-time highs, and opportunities for social mobility increased as old barriers began to fade.<sup>115</sup> Class

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<sup>114</sup>Rohe, Elections, Parties and Political Traditions, p. 157.

<sup>115</sup>Wolfgang Glatzer, Karl Otto Hondrich, Heinz-Herbert Noll, Karin Stiehr, and Barbara Woendl, Recent Social Trends in West Germany, 1960-1990, (Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 200.

consciousness still existed in West Germany, but not as it did before the Second World War.

The advancement of consumerism also helped break down old class distinctions and build new ones. Status has always been tied to wealth. The modern signs of affluence range from the cars people drive to the clothes they wear. Automobiles and their super highways, public transportation, and airlines have offered greater mobility to society at large. Consequently, most younger West Germans developed more cosmopolitan views. Their education and exposure to a bigger Germany, Europe and world, fostered international thinking. In the process, sectionalism eroded. Regional and cultural differences within Germany still existed, however, they were not as divisive as they were during the Weimar Republic.

Modernization changed attitudes towards women and their role in society. The Nazi regime rejected the trend of women in the work place until the demands of the war forced them to rely on women to replace the men who were off fighting. Still, the Nazis tried to meet the needs of wartime industry with slave labor. After the war, many women had to take the lead in providing for the family. The loss of millions of young men to the war, pushed the modernizing trend faster. Some women argued that social equality had not been obtained, and that old attitudes

persisted.<sup>116</sup> The changes in the past forty-five years were still notable.

Religion was another "victim" of modernization. As a unifying and dividing force of German politics, its importance waned. In 1953, three-quarters of the CDU's voters regularly practiced their religion, over one-half of them being Catholics.<sup>117</sup> By the mid-1980s, this number had fallen to one-third.<sup>118</sup> As in other aspects of social change, there were still signs of religion's importance in German society and politics. The potential for a resurgence in religious support existed, especially as a dividing line between christianity and other religions. The trend could not be ignored, however, that the importance of religion as a political basis of support was declining.

There were other signs of social change. The "cultural revolution" of the 1960s ushered in a decade moralism, radicalism, and artistic expression.<sup>119</sup> The peace and environmental movements, anti-establishment attitudes, and student demonstrations were all a part of the new generation of West Germans who did not associate with the decades of

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>117</sup>Rohe, Elections, Parties and Political Traditions, p. 196.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

<sup>119</sup>Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, A History of West Germany: Democracy and Its Discontents, 1963-1991, Vo. II, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 67.

rebuilding and sacrifice.<sup>120</sup> The leftist-oriented media helped sound the call for social and political change.

During the late 1960s and the 1970s, under the leadership of the Social Democrats, West Germany entered a new era of foreign policy, termed *Ostpolitik* (Eastern politics). Concerned with easing tensions between the two halves of Germany and with the Soviet Union, SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt sought to engage in dialogue with the east, by accepting the legitimacy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). This marked a major change in West German foreign policy. Adenauer and the CDU had followed the course of unification through strength and alliance with the west. This change in foreign policy is indicative of the SPD's mandate for change. Welfare expenditures and health care costs soared during the SPD's years in power, reflecting the SPD's concerns for the working class.

Many of the social changes discussed grew out of the maturing of an industrial modern society. One example is the pollution associated with advanced industrialization. Technology and education have brought these problems to light, and the mass media has galvanized public opinion to confront the issues. The social tensions resulting from industrialization and urbanization continued to pose a challenge for democracy. West Germany's political system

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<sup>120</sup>Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, A History of West Germany, p. 70.



has proved resilient, however. Capable of change and responsive to the needs of the masses, the political process kept the majority of people franchised. Those who felt they were outside the system tended to support the extremist parties. Their numbers were minimized by government involvement in labor disputes and the growing welfare protection.

West German democracy never had to face several converging forces of change at one time as had the hapless Weimar Republic did. The pace of change slowed and was uneven after the Second World War. Population growth, urbanization and industrialization all continued at different speeds in different regions. The Ruhr, pre-war industrial heartland, did not see much change. Bavaria on the other hand, was transformed from an agricultural state to one of high technology and heavy industry. One of the strengths of democracy is the ability to adapt to change. Federal and state governments became responsive to the needs of the people caught up in the pressures of societal change. The slackened pace of change, the conditioning of society to the acceptance of modernization, and the growing capabilities of government in dealing with social pressures, all worked to diffuse the potential for political crises.

Social change creates fertile ground for political extremism. There is a direct relation between the two. Political extremism's appeal increases when the societal

dislocations are greater. People who hold extreme political views, be they left or right, can always be found. In modern societies their numbers are usually small. Danger arises when more moderate people feel compelled to side with the extremists. Germany's political past supports this assertion. Electoral success generally depends on taking advantage of a crisis. The support gained is socially divergent, and quickly fades unless the conditions for success continue.

#### **D. RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM**

The focus in this section is on the right-wing of West German politics. The terms "far right" and "extreme right" are used to describe the entire spectrum in between. Other words, such as ultra, and radical can replace extreme. As political parties, the radical right has not enjoyed much success. Except for periodic surges in support, the far right has remained obscure. From 1949 to 1980, the trend was towards political consolidation. Parties other than the CDU, CSU, SPD, and FDP steadily lost support.

In 1949, 27.8 percent of the Federal electoral vote went to parties other than the main four. By 1980, the "other" parties received an all time low of only 0.5 percent of the total. The far right has done better in certain state elections and in the European parliament than in the Federal elections. Part of the reason are regional differences.

Before going into the history of the extreme right, a discussion of how nationalism's role in politics has changed is necessary.

The Second World War and the Nazi dictatorship left the Germans little about which to be proud. Nationalism and racism led to the murder of millions of innocent men, women, and children, and the most destructive war yet known to mankind. The old Pan-German nationalistic ideas were thoroughly discredited. Notions of racial superiority and dreams of a greater Germanic Empire ended in the dismemberment of Germany and the heavy moral burden of the terrible crimes committed. Most Germans have felt awkward since about displaying any patriotic or nationalistic sentiments. Those who have remained loyal to nationalistic ideals have either attempted to revise the historical interpretations of the Nazi era, or they have distanced themselves from the past.

The majority of nationalists has focused on the reunification of Germany; some have looked to the return of lost territories. Only the most extreme groups aspired to world power. The question of how to reunite Germany fractured the right-wing. Debates on the issue were somewhat reminiscent of those discussed earlier about German unification before 1871.

Since 1945, there were four main arguments regarding reunification. One called for better relations with the

Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, hopefully leading to an agreement on the issue.<sup>121</sup> The second called for closer Western ties and achieving unification through strength. The third envisioned a stronger Europe, free from American and Russian domination, which would set its own terms for the "German Question". A fourth resembled the third, however it leaned towards Germany renouncing the east and west, and adopting a strong neutral position.<sup>122</sup> Within each argument their existed disagreements over issues of timing, relations with other countries, and the use of military force. As a result, all attempts to unite the right-wing spectrum failed.

Five right-wing parties are examined in detail. There have been many more, but these five gained the most notoriety. None has have ever enjoyed much success in the Federal elections. Minor surges occurred during periods of real or perceived crises. Any gains made were quickly lost. Some scholars suggest that the far right has undergone a transformation over the 41 years of West German democracy.<sup>123</sup> This is debatable. Arguably, only the tactics and issues have changed. The underlying objectives and the leadership remain tied with the past.

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<sup>121</sup>Richard Stoess, Politics Against Democracy: Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany, translated by Lindsay Batson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), p. 24.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

The Socialist Party of the Reich (SRP), founded on October 2, 1949, by Dr. Fritz Dorls, was a splinter from the German Rights Party (DReP).<sup>124</sup> After some notable successes such as the receipt of 11 percent of the 1951 Lower Saxony *Landtag* vote, the Party was banned by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1952,<sup>125</sup> for its direct link with the NSDAP.

The German Rights Party later became the German Reich Party (DRP). Many SRP members joined the DRP after the SRP was banned. The DRP descended from the old German National People's Party (DNVP). Following the First World War, the DNVP was formed with the merging of the old conservative parties, discussed earlier. This conservative element survived the many years of change and turbulence, and was not greatly affected by the infusion of many ex-Nazis.

Wishing to avoid trouble with Federal Constitutional Court, the DRP refrained from setting forth clear political agenda. A return to the monarchial or an authoritarian order was certainly desired. The success of the CDU led coalition in the 1950s drained most support away from the DRP. In 1949, the DRP held five seats in the Bundestag. By 1961, the party could not win more than 0.8 percent of the federal vote. The only momentary success came in 1959 in

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<sup>124</sup>David Childs, "The Far Right in Germany since 1945," Neo-Fascism in Europe, ed. Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson, and Michalina Vaughan (New York: Longman Inc., 1991), p. 71.

<sup>125</sup>*Ibid.*

the state election for Rhineland-Palatinate, when the DRP gained 5.1 percent of the vote. One year after the founding of the National Democratic Party of Germany, the DRP disbanded itself in 1965. Most of its members joined the NPD.

On November 28, 1964, a new right-wing party was formed, the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD). Its founders hoped to revive the far right by rallying all of the nationalistic parties and groups under its banner. Economic difficulties and the "Grand Coalition" between the SPD and the CDU in 1966 gave the party a boost in the federal election, but it still failed to receive more than five percent. In state elections the NPD fared much better, winning sixty seats out of 849 in seven states between 1966 and 1968.<sup>126</sup> After 1969, all far right parties lost support and fell into obscurity for a decade.<sup>127</sup>

The *Verfassungsschutz* (Bureau of investigation for the protection of the Constitution) published a report citing several reasons why it believed the NPD failed. Some of the reasons given were:<sup>128</sup>

- factional fights within party
- improved economic conditions
- the fact that there was a limited number of people responsive to

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid, p. 73.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid, pp. 72-73.

the right-wing exploitation of prejudice and emotion  
-the increasing radicalization of the political style of the right-wing extremists, which was rejected in more conservative circles  
-the lack of tangible parliamentary successes by the representatives of the NPD in local and regional parliaments

The *Verfassungsschutz* classified the NPD as neo-Nazi, though the party tried to distance itself from this image. The NPD wanted to free Germany from foreign intervention, reunify the nation, and establish authoritarian rule.<sup>129</sup> NPD propaganda sought to minimize Germany's role in the world wars and the true nature of the Nazi regime in order to present the far right in a better light.

The failings of the NPD marked the beginning of a low point for the far right. Extreme nationalists clinging to the nostalgia of Nazism had lost touch with mainstream West Germany. Relegated to obscurity, the far right went from a high of 36,800 members in 1968 to a low of 17,300 in 1975.<sup>130</sup> Most former supporters joined the CDU and CSU during their years of opposition against the social/liberal coalition. Not until the CDU, CSU, and FDP came to power in 1982 did the situation begin to turn around.

With the conservative parties back in power, the unifying force of opposition was gone. Once again, there was room for disagreement on the political right. In addition, West Germany began to enter the pos-industrial

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, p. 74.

phase of development. The social ramifications of post-industrialization, coupled with an increase in immigration has, built fertile ground for the far right to work.

One of the parties to capitalize on the changing circumstances was the German People's Union (DVM). Founded by Dr. Gerhard Frey in 1971, the original DVU remained a non-party organization. Frey gave financial support to the NPD, and concentrated on the publishing of right-wing material. By 1987, Frey announced the creation of a DVU party, '*Deutsche Volkliste*,' or *Liste D*, separate from the non-party DVM. The regular DVM claimed over 12,000 members in 1987.<sup>131</sup> The DVM *Liste D* was reported to have 2,500 members that same year.

The NPD never disappeared entirely. In the 1987 federal election it nearly doubled its support from 0.23 percent in 1983 to 0.6 percent in ten state lists with over 227,000 votes. Insignificant on the West German political scene, the NPD and the DVM *Liste D* competed for a small percentage of the voters. Not until a new party, the *Republikaner*, came onto the scene in the 1989 elections was it really clear that right-wing support was swelling.

Franz Schoenhuber, a former television journalist who served in the SS, helped found the *Republikaner* (REP) in 1983. Since then he became the leader of the party. In 1989 the REP gained six seats in the European parliament

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<sup>131</sup>Stoess, Politics Against Democracy, p. 196.



with 7.1 percent of the vote.<sup>132</sup> The West Berlin election of 1989 alarmed many when the REP won 7.5 percent of the votes. In all other federal and state elections from 1987 until reunification, the REP did poorly. Nonetheless, the 1989 results were the first far right successes since the late 1960s.

The REP has portrayed itself as a party between the conservative CDU\CSU and the extreme right-wing. Schoenhuber has made public statements denouncing National Socialism. In addition, the party claims that, "No one may become a member the party DIE REPUBLIKANER who belongs to or supports an unconstitutional organization or a left-wing or right-wing extremist group."<sup>133</sup> Focusing on the reunification of Germany, the increase in immigration, education, and social problems, the REP has tried to avoid contact with the more extreme right. Yet, rhetoric about "asylum-seekers," and the media's alleged abuse of the freedom of speech, along with views on NATO and reunification, classified the party as on the edge of extremism. Though the Verfassungsschutz declared the party within the constitution, many including the SPD, have called for a closer examination.

All of the extreme right-wing parties and organizations have not been covered, nor have those addressed been

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid, p. 205.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid, p. 202.

thoroughly examined. In 1987 there were 69 right-wing groups, including parties.<sup>134</sup> Though the parties demonstrated some limited success, they still remained very fractured among themselves. The leaders of the DVM and the REP, the two most successful political parties on the far right, wanted nothing to do with each other.

Further to the extreme right were the militant neo-Nazis. Many did not hide their support for National Socialism. Neo-Nazi skinheads instigated numerous street fights and terrorist activities. From 1977 until 1988 there were an average of 23 militant groups with about 57 members each.<sup>135</sup> Right-wing violence escalated steadily from 136 acts in 1974 to 2,475 in 1982.<sup>136</sup> There was a drop in crimes from 1982 until 1986, when the number started to rise once again to just under 1,500 in 1987.<sup>137</sup> The rising trend of violence continued right up until reunification. The next chapter will revisit this issue and address extreme right activities after German unification.

A broad analysis of the West German political right would start with the CDU, which has right of center and far

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<sup>134</sup>David Childs, "The Far Right in Germany since 1945," Neo-Fascism in Europe, p. 77.

<sup>135</sup>Christopher T. Husbands, "Militant Neo-Nazis in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980s," in Neo-Fascism in Europe, p. 91.

<sup>136</sup>Stoess, Politics Against Democracy, p. 167.

<sup>137</sup>David Childs, "The Far Right in Germany since 1945," Neo-Fascism in Europe, p. 82.

right members. The CSU would come next, slightly more right than the CDU. On the far right would be the REP. Next, entering the extreme right is the DVM Liste D. A little further is the NPD. Finally, there are the militant neo-Nazis.

Within the neo-Nazi arena there are different strands of National Socialism. The Strasserite branch has broken away from the traditional neo-Nazis, committed to Hitler's version. The Strasser brothers and men like Ernst Roehm, leader of the "Stormtroopers," believed in a complete revolution of society, destroying all vestiges of the bourgeois world. The new proponents of National Socialism claim that Hitler sold out the movement to capitalists, bureaucrats, and the middle class.

This gives an idea of where the different political parties fit in relation to each other; it also demonstrates how fractured the right is. This is not to say that it cannot unite. A basic goal of many rightists is the creation of a solid nationalist front. Differences within the right and the lack of a powerful, charismatic leader, have been the major problems so far.

The information presented demonstrates that the rise in right-wing violence and political support began well before reunification on October 3, 1990. German unification certainly brought new challenges to democracy, however, it is not the root of Germany's problems. These new

difficulties will be discussed in the next chapter, but first it is important to explore the causes of the right-wing resurgence before unification.

#### **E. POST-INDUSTRIALIZATION**

The signs of post-industrialization are clear in most Western European countries, the United States, and Japan. The social and economic dislocations in West Germany which led to a rise in rightist tendencies before unification, were the result of this new phase in societal development. Part of post-industrialization is the dawning of the information revolution, advanced consumerism and global economic interdependence at the highest level.

An avalanche of revolutions is occurring, if one is to believe all the headlines. The "New Industrial Revolution," the "Military Technological Revolution," or MTR for the technocrats, or the "Technological Revolution," separate from the military, the "Information Revolution," are terms used to describe the flood of change. This is not the place to debate whether these are all truly revolutionary or not. What is important is the fact that incredible change is all around, forcing people to re-examine their lives and the world.

The section on social change was in the past tense, dealing with the continued forces of the old Industrial Revolution, which really took off in Germany during the

1880s to the 1890s. It was seen how this revolution caused severe strains on the Wilhelmine society and how the Weimar Republic confronted the challenges unsuccessfully, leading to the Nazi state. The destruction of Third Reich left two Germanies, both forced to deal with the same issues which began before the turn of the century.

The Federal Republic of Germany has successfully dealt with the problems associated with industrialization in the past. Now there are new challenges from the move towards post-industrialization. A loose term used to cover the gambit of revolutionary changes. This is the nature of human development. Just when we figure out how to solve the problems which accompany advancement, we advance again. Politics have always lagged behind social and economic advance.

One of the difficulties of dealing with change of this nature is the gradual and uneven pace at which it proceeds. While governments begin to confront this new challenge to stability, they still have to address tensions resulting from the past. This intersection between the old and the new is always extremely difficult to navigate. Sometimes governments turn to adventurism or nationalism in order to divert attention from the domestic problems. Europe before the First World War, and specifically Germany, are good examples.

There are many facets to post-industrialization. Only some of them will be covered in order to convey the enormity and complexity of this phenomenon and its social impact. One of the most important trends is the increase in automation and robotics, which is replacing humans in many fields of manufacturing and routine work.<sup>138</sup> In 1980 there were 1,255 industrial robots installed in West Germany. By 1989 this number reached 22,395.<sup>139</sup> In order to compete with cheap labor in less developed countries, German firms are forced to automate or move their businesses to other regions. Either way, the German worker is affected. Forced to take wage cuts, move into service jobs, or retrain for another career, are the prospects for many German workers. All choices are difficult and socially disruptive.

If the trend is slow, then the government can help by offering assistance for new job training. Over the past few decades the trends have been rather slow. The percentage of people employed in the primary sector, agriculture, forestry, and mining, went from 25 percent in 1950 to five percent in 1987.<sup>140</sup> The percentage of people employed in manufacturing went from nearly 50 percent in 1965 to 40 percent in 1987. The service sector has shown dramatic

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<sup>138</sup>Paul Kennedy, Preparing for the Twenty-First Century, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 89.

<sup>139</sup>Recent Social Trends, p. 168.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid, p. 162.

change, from thirty-two percent in 1950 to fifty-four percent in 1987.<sup>141</sup> Indications are that the decline in manufacturing and the increase in service jobs are accelerating. With a growing government debt, and more people needing support, will the demands be met?

Another competitor for government funds are the older generations which are approaching retirement age. Two world wars have left their mark demographically; moreover, advanced industrialization has been accompanied by a decline in the birth rate to near zero. With people living longer, and retiring at a younger age, the demands on the state's welfare system are rapidly growing. By the year 2000, 25 percent of the population will be 60 or older.<sup>142</sup> Even with the current turn around in a positive birth rate, Germany will face a decade or more of fiscal problems confronting this issue.

Advanced consumerism is leading to new modes of production. More and more people will be able to specify design features desired in products tailored to individual tastes. People are interacting with design and production specialists as never before. Will this lead to a greater sense of individuality? Will the trend continue into the political arena, where common people will give inputs into

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid, p. 164.

<sup>142</sup>Michael Mertes, "Germany's Social and Political Culture," Daedalus, (Winter 1994): 13.

the decision making process? Does this mean a revolution in the way governments operate? There are no answers to these questions, only more uncertainty as to the impact on society and politics.

Computers, satellites and advanced communications have produced an information explosion. World-wide information networks give anyone with a computer unprecedented access to data. Ideas, technology, and knowledge pass from one side of the globe to the other at a dizzying pace, frequently beyond government control. The impact of mass media on society and politics in the 1890s was enormous. It was effectively used for enlightenment and for enslavement to mould people's opinions. Modern technology has the same potentials, only on a greater scale.

Another benefit from the Information Revolution is the mobility of capital. Electronic transaction now occur seven days a week 24 hours a day, crossing international boundaries around the world.<sup>143</sup> The global investment pool is larger than many state's GNP. The speed at which investments can leave a country has limited the flexibility of state governments, and left them fearful of the economic consequences.<sup>144</sup> The globalization of national economies has changed the way the world does business.

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<sup>143</sup>Kennedy, Preparing for the Twenty-First Century, p. 123.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid, p. 129.



Though corporate names live on, they are now multinational organizations loosely connected for certain business ventures.<sup>145</sup> The names represent powerful marketing tools, used for the sake of familiarity. For example, Chrysler Motor Corporation only produced thirty percent of the value of its cars in 1990.<sup>146</sup> The same trend applies to German corporations, such as BMW, Volkswagen and Siemens.

Large national corporations are disappearing, therefore economic competition between states has become more than out-producing and out selling one another; it is about attracting businesses and investment into one's country. The education of a skilled work force, the building of advanced transportation infrastructures, and the maintenance a stable social and political environment are the keys to future economic competitiveness.<sup>147</sup>

There are other indications of an ever faster changing world. The macro-trends discussed merely highlight a fraction of the ongoing changes. Some in German society have taken advantage of the new opportunities and are profiting nicely. Others have are being left behind, bewildered, anxious, and longing for the "better years" of the past. These trends began to impact West German society

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<sup>145</sup>Robert B. Reich, The Work of Nations, (New York: Vintage Books, 1991,1992), pp. 98-109.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid, p. 322.

in the mid 1980s. The once esteemed and envied West German "social market" economy was losing its edge. An Economist article stated:

Observers, especially outside of Germany, began to see the country not as a new model but as the best example of a crumbling corporatism whose high-cost perfectionism was unsuited to a new world of low-cost international competition.

The welfare state was feeling the strains of post-industrialization, as were most other western democracies, as 1990 approached.

Before West German politicians could respond to the new challenges, the Cold War ended. The question of German unification came to the fore, and after 45 years Germany became one state again. A truly significant historical event, reunification overshadowed the structural problems which some West Germans were only starting to recognize. The process of bringing two opposite societies together is posing a major challenge for Germany. In order to appreciate the difficulty, an understanding of East German developments is necessary.

#### **F. EAST GERMANY**

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded on October 7, 1949, in response to the Federal Republic of Germany, founded in the west on May 23, 1949. Under the shadow of the Soviet Union, the GDR became a communist country modeled after Stalin's rule. The Socialist Unity Party (SED), led by Walter Ulbricht, was the only political

party allowed. Styling himself after Stalin, Ulbricht ruled with a heavy hand until 1971. A worker's revolt in Berlin and other major cities erupted in 1953, and was ruthlessly suppressed by Soviet troops and tanks.

The flood of East Germans to the West resulted in a serious crisis for the communist regime. Between 1945 to 1961 over two million Germans fled the east, prompting the GDR to build a wall around West Berlin in 1961. The borders were well guarded and police were ordered to shoot anyone trying to escape. Still some people braved the dangers; many made it to the west, others died trying. Most East Germans resigned themselves to living in a police state and quietly accepted their plight.

In 1971 Ulbricht was replaced by Erich Honecker as Party leader. Many hoped for sweeping reforms, but were disappointed. Honecker did ease the states intrusiveness, however. Limited economic success, relaxed control over private lives, and a general improvement in living standards helped many tolerate the regime. Able to watch West German television programs, the East German people dreamed of life on the other side.

Honecker attempted to increase living standards through the production of more consumer goods and construction. His plan was successful to a degree, however, the expense became a burden on the government. Without adequate incentives, the East German people became apathetic towards work. Lack

of competition acted as a drag on the economy. Stagnation was a serious national security dilemma. By the 1980s, the East German infrastructure desperately needed help. Roads, bridges, communications systems, housing, and factories were all deteriorating. Though some argue that the East German regime could have gone on indefinitely had it not been for external events, the decay and economic crisis suggest that the end was approaching.

For all the negative aspects of socialism, the East German people did not worry about having a job, and basic needs were met. There was law and order. For the people of East Germany, making the transition to a liberal democracy, where the values are completely different, is difficult at best. The younger, less indoctrinated in socialism, will likely find the transition easier, if they can find work. Security and stability are missed by many of the older generations. Life in democracies is about toleration and compromises, opportunities and dangers. Ever since Hitler came to power in 1933, those Germans living in the east have only known authoritarian rule. Those 57 years have left their mark on the East Germans.

When the winds of change swept through eastern Europe in 1989, the GDR was not ready. A rigid state, focused on imprisoning its people, proved incapable of responding to the rapid chain of events which began with the Hungarian decision to lower the country's border restrictions.

Immediately, East Germans by the tens of thousands began pouring into Hungary and on to West Germany. The beginning of the end for the GDR had occurred. Appreciating the enormous differences between living in a free society and a police state is essential to grasping the complexity of integrating two peoples into one state.

## **V. CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE: 1990->**

For this analysis the formal process of German reunification is not as important here as are the ramifications. So far this thesis has looked at the historical problems of united Germany's political stability. The signs of a "New Industrial Revolution" in West German surfaced before unification, and have continued to the present. In addition, both halves of Germany must confront the challenge of building a common heritage and overcoming the cultural differences of the past 45 years. This task is the greatest for Germany since the end of the Second World War.

There are numerous other difficulties, many of which have been wrongly blamed on reunification. Massive immigration from eastern Europe and war torn Yugoslavia has led to social tensions and racial violence. The end of the Cold War allowed the reunification of Germany, but it has also placed a new Germany in the awkward position of redefining its foreign policy. As a world economic power, Germany is expected to play a larger role in international affairs. Yet, Germany has the political difficulty of asserting itself because of the Nazi past. In addition, the world began entering a global recession in the late 1980s, exacerbating the Federal Republic's economic difficulties

with unification. These are some of the divergent challenges facing Germany today. Still, unification proves to be the most difficult obstacle to stability.

#### **A. REUNIFICATION**

The "two plus four talks," between the two Germanies, the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and France led to the signing of the "Unification Treaty" on August 31, 1990. Unification took place on October 3, 1990.<sup>148</sup> In a blur the German Democratic Republic was gone. The laws and currency of the Federal Republic of Germany were brought to the east German states. West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) pushed ahead on unification ignoring the criticism and concerns of many people. The SPD wanted to slow the process down and carefully consider each step. Kohl sensed the moment for turning back was gone, the opportunity was fleeting. Promising that unification would not hurt West Germany, Kohl convinced many of his countrymen to support his policy.

German historians of the future should praise the decisiveness and courage of Helmut Kohl. Until then he faces harsh criticism from sections Germany society for his

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<sup>148</sup>Note: for more information on unification, please see; Gert-Joachim Glaessner, and Ian Wallace, ed., The German Revolution of 1989, (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1992).

Elizabeth Pond, Beyond the Wall, Germany's Road to Unification, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1993).

Konrad H. Jarausch, The Rush to German Unity, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

government's policies. Unification has been painful for most Germans, east and west. The extent of decay in east Germany and the costs of rebuilding were completely underestimated. Since 1990, unification has cost the government about DM 180 billion a year.<sup>149</sup> This equals one-half of Germany's annual tax revenues.<sup>150</sup> Currently, the government spends 52 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Before unification it was 45 percent. The government debt has grown to DM 1.5 trillion, making interest payments the largest share of the public budget.<sup>151</sup>

Social spending has soared in recent years. In 1950, 27 percent of the federal budget went to social programs; today it has reached 47 percent.<sup>152</sup> The social budget rose 12 percent between 1991 and 1992, 7.7 percent for western Germany, and 39.9 percent for the east.<sup>153</sup> In 1992, old-age pensions cost DM 290.9 billion, health insurance DM 210.4 billion, disability insurance DM 16.7 billion, and labor assistance DM 110.5 billion.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup>"A Survey of Germany: Model Vision," The Economist, 21 May 1994 p. 6.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>153</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-125, 1 July 1993, p. 21.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.



Paying for these social programs has forced the government to raise taxes in the west. Income taxes went up 7.5 percent in July of 1991.<sup>155</sup> Further tax increases are currently being debated, with Chancellor Kohl insisting that this not be done before 1995, and the SPD calling for an immediate increase. A fifty cent per gallon gasoline tax went into effect in 1991 also.<sup>156</sup> Germany is already one of the highest taxed countries in the world.<sup>157</sup> With the loss of jobs, cuts in welfare, and increased taxes, animosity in the west has risen. Germans in the west refer to the east Germans as *Jammer-Ossi* (wailing easterners).<sup>158</sup> Hardening of attitudes is only adding to the difficult tasks of uniting Germany.

The shock of unification has dashed the hopes and expectations of many east Germans. Having been promised the living standards of the west overnight, the easterners feel betrayed.<sup>159</sup> A common slogan is 'Verraten und Verkauft,' (deceived and sold).<sup>160</sup> This epitomizes the disenchantment

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<sup>155</sup>Donald S. Kellerman, The Pulse of Europe, Sec. III, (Time Mirror Center for the People and Press, 1992), p. 100.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid.

<sup>157</sup>"A Survey of Germany: Model Vision," The Economist, p. 7.

<sup>158</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-173, 9 September 1993, p. 34, from Der Spiegel, Hamburg, 23 Aug 93, pp 24-27.

<sup>159</sup>Mary Fulbrook, "Nation, State, and Political Culture in Divided Germany," in The State of Germany, p. 195.

<sup>160</sup>"Growing Weight of Germany's Unification," New York Times, 8 March 1993, C:1.

of the east. Wages have only made it to 65 percent of those in the west, and Kohl has argued for a reversal, while unions want as high as eighty-two percent.<sup>161</sup> With a population of just under 16 million, the east Germans have lost 4.4 million jobs since unification. Many easterners view their western cousins with contempt, using the slang *Besser-Wessi* (know-it-alls).<sup>162</sup> The federal elections this year will likely reflect this dissatisfaction in the east with the Kohl government.

The prognosis for the future is not as poor as many believe. Though unemployment is high for Germany, over four million, there are signs of economic growth.<sup>163</sup> Government social spending is decreasing. Increased taxes will help cut the growing deficit and debt. The shock is over, people are resigning themselves for a long road towards recovery. Government, business, and labor leaders appreciate the structural problems which must be addressed.

Unfortunately, with an election year at hand, many are shying away from the hard decisions, and are blaming the opposition for the difficulties. If the political scene becomes too fractured, then coalition building may prove challenging. Overcoming the obstacles to stability and

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<sup>161</sup>Ibid, C:3.

<sup>162</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-173, 9 September 1993, p. 34.

<sup>163</sup>"A Survey of Germany: Model Vision," The Economist, p. 34.

future prosperity will require strong leadership and teamwork.

## **B. IMMIGRATION AND RACIAL VIOLENCE**

Not since the end of the Second World War have so many people been on the move in Europe. Germany, the border state between economic despair in the east and prosperity in the west, is especially troubled with the influx of immigrants. The tidal wave began in 1987, when 86,000 ethnic Germans returned from eastern Europe. This was twice as many as the year before. A staggering 397,073 resettlers arrived in 1990. A total of 1.5 million ethnic Germans migrated to Germany between 1987 and 1992.<sup>164</sup>

In addition, hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers have sought refuge since 1989. Germany has taken in more immigrants than all of Europe combined. In 1991, 256,112 asylum seekers entered Germany. The number jumped to over 438,000 in 1992.<sup>165</sup> Declining to 322,000 in 1993, the numbers are still enormous.<sup>166</sup> Most asylum seekers are economic vice political refugees. Nonetheless, the German government must process each individual. Meanwhile they are given free room and board, social security benefits, and

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<sup>164</sup>German Information Center, Press Release, June 1993.

<sup>165</sup>Alasdair Stewart, Migrants, Minorities, and Security in Europe, Conflict Studies 252, Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1992, p. 7.

<sup>166</sup>FBIS-WEU, 5 January 1994, p. 6.

work permits. The processing time has generally taken between eight months to four years, however, the government has taken steps to speed it up. Though 80 to 90 percent of applicants are denied asylum, the logistics of sending them back to their countries of origin have proven extremely difficult. Agreements with Romania, Poland, and other eastern European states have helped the situation.

On December 6, 1992, the government coalition and SPD agreed to legislation limiting immigration. May 1993 witnessed the passing of an amendment to the German asylum laws. The new laws made important distinctions between victims of war, political persecution, and economic deprivation. Immigrants coming to Germany through a "third safe country," are to be denied access. Provisions were also made for faster processing times.

All of these measures have helped, but people are still pouring into Germany illegally. Many denied asylum have stayed anyway. With the economic recession, higher taxes, and the burden of unification, many Germans have turned on the *Auslaender*. The far right has played on people's fears blaming the asylum seekers for Germany's troubles. Sixty-two percent of Germans polled believe there are too many foreigners in Germany, up from 43 in 1991. Perceptions have twisted reality causing great anxiety.

Michael Burleigh suggests that German perceptions of the east have always been mixed;

The German mission to bring civilization and order to the Slavs was gradually given a biological accent in the form of the slogan 'Drang nach Osten,' whereby the Germans were somehow compelled to venture eastwards. Since by the late nineteenth century this notion was wildly at variance with a general demographic drift westwards, the perception grew that the Germans were holding back an uncontrollable Slavic flood or wave. The East as a literary and historical construct was thus simultaneously a land of opportunity and demographic menace, notions which have endured to the present time.<sup>167</sup>

Businesses certainly view the east as a land of opportunity, but the average German citizen believes the "Slavic horde" is threatening to overrun their country. Manipulators of fear are capitalizing on this anxiety.

Neo-Nazis and other extreme right-wing racists have targeted the foreigners, including the few million Turkish guest workers. Most Turks have lived in Germany for years; some have been born in Germany. They have taken the jobs that most Germans did not want. The violence is not really over jobs though; it is about racism. Right-wing politicians are using the fear of foreigners as a weapon to mobilize support. In this case perceptions are more important than reality.

The rise in racial violence corresponds with the increase of immigrants into Germany. The number of right-wing violent incidents rocketed from 128 in 1990 to 780 in 1991. After the government crack-down on extremists, the

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<sup>167</sup>Michael Burleigh, "Scholarship, State, and Nation," in The German State, p. 130.

number dropped from 2,366 in 1992, to about 1,699 in 1993.<sup>168</sup> Most offenders, about 70 percent, are less than 20 years old; their social backgrounds are very diverse. The majority of violent acts is perpetrated by males. Eighteen percent are unemployed. A higher than average number of offenders includes "workers or salaried employees." Education levels are predominantly low to median. Only 37 percent of suspects in western Germany belong to an extreme right-wing organization; in east Germany, the percentage is 19.<sup>169</sup>

The organization and national coordination of these numerous extremist groups are limited. On the local level, they are small and disciplined. When organizations are banned, the members found a new one or join another similar group. The police crack-down has brought the divergent groups closer together. Sophisticated computer networks has aided in communicating and hiding from the authorities.<sup>170</sup> Recent attempts to found a unified national front have failed. As long as the social and economic conditions

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<sup>168</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-236, 10 December, 1993, p. 27, "Right-Wing Extremist Violence Declines," in *Hamburg Bild*, 8 December 1993, p. 2.

<sup>169</sup>Note: all violence demographics from:  
Press Release, 29 July 1993, "Offenders Do Not Fit Typical Profiles," San Francisco, Ca., Consulate General's Office.

<sup>170</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-243, 21 December 1993, p. 24, "Neo-Nazis Use Telekom BTX for Propaganda," in *Berlin Berliner Zeitung*, 15 December 1993, p. 4.

persist, then the appeal of extremist organizations will continue to rise, even with greater efforts of the police to break them up.

### **C. POLITICS IN A NEW GERMANY**

The fracturing of the political scene before unification has already been covered. The CDU and SPD are still the most powerful parties. The CSU and FDP continue to play crucial roles. Yet, the rise of the Greens, the Republicans, and the DVM, is being overshadowed by the multitude of other parties that have emerged since unification. Even if many of these parties do not make the five percent hurdle, they will drain votes away from the established parties. This could make coalition building difficult. With the problems facing Germany, the last thing needed is a weak coalition, unable to pass important legislation.

The SED of the old GDR has transformed itself into the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). In the first all-German national election of 1990, the PDS only won 2.4 percent of the vote, but managed to gain 17 seats with the help of a special law allowing a party access with five percent in east or west Germany.<sup>171</sup> The PDS will likely gain

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<sup>171</sup>German Information Center, "The 1994 German Elections: An Overview," New York: Press Release, December 1993, p. 4.

more support this year in view of east German voter dissatisfaction with the Kohl government.

There is a multitude of new and old smaller parties, which do not represent a threat individually, but can as a group. The demise of the GDR has led to the forming of the German Social Union (DSU), the *Buendnis '90* (Alliance '90), and the *Neues Forum* (New Forum), to name a few. The DSU is a sister party to the Bavarian CSU. Alliance '90 has merged with the Greens. The New Forum is a grass roots party. Little is written about its agenda.

Other parties have sprung up. Markus Wegner, former member of the CDU, has founded the *Statt Partei* (Instead Party).<sup>172</sup> He protested the candidate selection process. His new party won 5.6 percent of the Hamburg state election.<sup>173</sup> The question must be asked, whether the rise of fringe parties will disrupt the political process, or if they are merely a passing phenomenon?

The Greens, the Republikans, the PDS and the DVU have shown staying power in state and local elections. The PDS and Greens\ Alliance '90, even made it into the Bundestag in 1990.<sup>174</sup> In an article titled "Crisis or Change? On the Future of Politics in the Post-industrial Age," Hans-Georg Betz, wrote:

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<sup>172</sup>Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid.



The successes of both left-wing libertarian, as well as radical right-wing populist parties, are perhaps the most salient proof of the thesis that the party systems of the modern Western democracies are currently undergoing a fundamental process of transformation. This process is the result of far-reaching social changes that are closely linked with entry into the postindustrial modern age. And yet, it would be precipitous to justify the resultant political turbulences that mark the present-day image of the Western democracies solely as the breakup of the traditional lines of conflict. The successes of left-wing libertarian and radical right-wing populist parties are, at least in part, an expression of a questioning of the traditional transmission of political power, which has been dominated by an elite.<sup>175</sup>

If this is a major transformation of the political scene, there is no reason to believe the major parties cannot adapt. The future is not written. Parties have changed through the years, the SPD is an example.

When the first West German elections were held 14 different parties were represented in the Bundestag. After four years of successful CDU leadership, the number dropped considerably. In this current period of rapid social change it is natural that the political scene will splinter. Political impotence is a real danger if working coalitions cannot be formed. However, Germany also has the ability to overcome this period of turbulence. If a strong coalition can be built after these elections, and the hard decisions made, then German democracy may adjust to the strains of post-industrialization. Success will depend on the actions of ordinary people. German history has shown us how those who supported democracy failed against those bent on its

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<sup>175</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-090-S, 12 May 1993, "Germany: Vote Alienation," p. 10, from Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, B11/93, 12 March 1993, pp 3-13.

destruction. Today the number of people against democracy is on the rise once again.

The extreme right has grown in recent years, beginning before unification. The economic difficulties associated with unification, and the wave of immigrants has given impetus to the movement. The major parties and groups of the extreme right are;

Name		Profile	Status
DVM	German People's Union	extreme right List D, party	active
Rep	The Republikaner	extreme right	active
NPD	National Democratic Party of Germany	oldest extreme right party	active
DL	German League for Nation and Homeland	assembly of former Rep and members of NPD	active
GdNF	Community of Interests of the New Front	neo-Nazi group for refounding NSDAP & Fourth Reich	active
DA	German Alternative	party-political arm of GdNF, active in eastern Germany	forbidden December 1992
FAP	Free German Workers Party	neo-Nazi group founded in Stuttgart	ban is called for
HNG	Auxiliary Organization for National Political Prisoners	very active, acts as a link between various neo-Nazi groups	active
NSDAP-AO	NSDAP Foreign Organization	extensive Nazi propaganda, established in U.S.	active
WJ	Viking Youth	organized in pattern of Hitler Youth, previously linked with FAP	active

NF	Nationalistic Front	tight Nazi-cadre group, point of concentration North Rhine-Westphalia	forbidden November 1992
NO	National Offensive	primarily in Bavaria & Saxony, most members from FAP	forbidden December 1992
NB	National Bloc	neo-Nazi splinter group from DA & FAP	forbidden June 1993
DKB	German Comradeship League	neo-Nazi group founded in Wilhelmshaven	forbidden December 1992
HVD	Homeland Loyal Association of Germany	neo-Nazi group concentrated in Baden-Wurttemberg	forbidden June 1993

Reproduced from *Die TAGESZEITUNG*, 25Aug93, p.3.<sup>176</sup>

Once a group or party is banned, the leaders and members either join another organization or found a new one themselves. The government's crackdown has caused some chaos in the right. As long as the government remains committed to monitoring extreme rightist groups, and banning those breaking the law, then the danger they pose will be minimized.

Unfortunately, the extreme right has an effective political weapon - terror. Intimidating people has always been a part of the militant neo-Nazi agenda. Recently, an article in a rightist magazine listed 250 names of politicians, lawyers, journalists, teachers, social workers, and business people, who stand in the way of the extreme

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<sup>176</sup>FBIS-WEU-93-173, 9 September 1993

right's plans.<sup>177</sup> Compiling an extensive list such as this, required regional cooperation among the many divergent groups. Modern technology allows national networks, information hotlines, and electronic mail boxes, giving the radical right the power to coordinate actions nationally.<sup>178</sup>

Traditionally the extreme right has been fractured, lacking a strong, charismatic leadership. This could change. There are individuals who may succeed in unifying the right. Ewald Althans, 28 years old, is the self appointed director of his own German Youth Education Program, and hopes to be the next leader of the extreme right movement. The Chief of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution has stated, "Germany's most dangerous, modern, and revisionist youth group," is led by Althans, who "has everything the others are lacking, he knows the entire gamut of persuasion."<sup>179</sup> The liberal magazine *Der Spiegel*, of Hamburg, claimed Althans "could be the most dangerous demagogue in the right-wing spectrum."<sup>180</sup>

Since the age of thirteen, Althans has been groomed to be the next Nazi leader. He has learned from Willi Kraemer, special consultant to Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of

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<sup>177</sup>"Hatred Rising," *World Press Review*, February 1994, Vo. 41, N. 2, pp.11,12, from *Martin Klingst*, "'Enemies' must be 'Eliminated,'" *Die Zeit*, Hamburg.

<sup>178</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup>FBIS-WEU, 15 May 1992, p. 15.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*

Propaganda, and Ernst Remer, former commander of the "Guard Battalion Greater Germany." Althans has his own publishing company and brings in enough money to help him organize his neo-Nazi group. Althans prophesizes, "Bolshevism is dead. The capitalist United States will collapse in the next 10 years. Now the entire world is waiting for the gigantic German power."<sup>181</sup>

The state and federal elections in 1994 have generated a great deal of speculation and anxiety about the future of Germany's political system. The 1990 elections were a poor showing for the extreme right. The REP's successes in the 1987 West Berlin election were lost, as it failed to win any seats in united Berlin's election of December 1990.<sup>182</sup> In Bavaria the REP won 4.9 percent of the vote, just missing the five percent hurdle.<sup>183</sup> The 1991 Bremen state election saw the DVM gain 6.2 percent of the vote and six seats.<sup>184</sup> Then the REP won 10.9 percent of the Baden-Wurttemberg election in 1992, causing great consternation.<sup>185</sup> A

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<sup>181</sup>Ibid.

<sup>182</sup>German Information Center, "The 1994 German Elections: An Overview," p. 5.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

traditionally strong CDU state, the CDU lost 9.4 percent from their last election.<sup>186</sup>

In the elections since, neither the DVM or the REP have had any success. A couple of elections gave the REP over four percent of the vote, not enough for seats. The European Parliament elections on June 12, 1994, were a major setback for the REP. The seven percent won five years ago fell to only four percent, forcing the party out of the European Parliament.<sup>187</sup> The CDU won a great victory against the predictions of polls, with forty percent of the vote compared to the SPD's thirty-three percent.<sup>188</sup> Signs that the economy is improving, and rejection of the racial violence associated with the extreme right are attributed to the CDU's success.

There are still major elections ahead in 1994. October 16, 1994 is the date for the Bundestag elections.<sup>189</sup> Until then there are still five state elections, including Bavaria. Polls before the European Parliament elections showed the SPD ahead of the CDU, however, Helmut Kohl has proven capable of coming from behind in the past. The latest election results show the CDU doing well. A victory

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<sup>186</sup>Ibid.

<sup>187</sup>"Conservative Parties Gain in European Vote," New York Times, 13 June 1994, A:3,C1.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid.

<sup>189</sup>German Information Center, "The 1994 German Elections: An Overview," p. 8.

in the Bundestag elections like the European Parliament would give the CDU a strong mandate. The concern is whether its coalition partner will survive. The FDP lost all of its seats in the European Parliament.<sup>190</sup>

With whom would the CDU form a coalition? A "Grand Coalition" with the SPD could be awkward and difficult. Such other parties, as the Greens and PDS would be even more troublesome. Another possibility is that the FDP will survive and change coalitions, joining the SPD. The Greens and PDS may even join if necessary to overcome the CDU and CSU. The danger of the fringe parties, including the extreme right, lies in fracturing the political scene to the point where coalitions are difficult or impossible to hold together. A strong showing for either of the major parties is important for future stability, but the FDP's success or failure will also play a decisive role.

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<sup>190</sup>"Conservative Parties Gain in European Vote," New York Times, 13 June 1994, A:3,C1.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This story began with the unification of Germany in 1871 as the Second Reich, the creation of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck through "Blood and Iron." It has ended with the reunification of Germany after 45 years of forced separation, through a bloodless revolution of the East German people. As the new Federal Republic of Germany sets out to build a new identity for all Germans, one is struck by the enormous destruction and suffering which have resulted from the past hundred years of German nation-building.

Germany is not alone to face such a difficult past. Its size, population, and industrial potential, however, have caused great danger for other neighboring countries. Italy followed a very similar path of development, but its military capability never seriously threatened the world order, while that of Germany did. Germany also stands out for its institutionalized mass murder of millions. Perhaps these points are why historians, political scientists, and socialologists are so interested in Germany, as German internal political developments have had grave consequences for the world.

Germany has had an unfortunate modern past. The industrial revolution hit the country hardest immediately



after unification in 1871. Its monarchical institutions were rigid and unwilling to face the political challenges resulting from increased social tensions. Technological advances brought mass media and transportation, making mass politics possible. Ideas of nationalism and racism became twisted for radical political goals. Communism threatened to destroy the old order. A period of political crisis evolved in which the conservative ruling elites were incapable or unwilling to resolve. This was Wilhelmine Germany on the eve of the First World War. The war would only bring death to millions, and privation for tens of millions, exacerbating the existing social problems in Germany. Clearly Germany had reached an intersection where the old was giving way to the new, but not without a struggle.

Nearly one hundred years later Germany is once again confronted with epoch change while attempting to deal with the issues of unification. There is a parallel between the Germany of the 1890s and Germany today. Fortunately, this time Germany is governed by democracy, which is much more adaptive to change than authoritarian monarchies. That is, if they can address the true problems and work to build political consensus.

The Weimar Republic's demise is instructional in how the strengths of democracy can become its greatest weakness. Instead of building consensus, the Republic bred division.

The Federal Republic of Germany today has no resemblance to the hapless Weimar Republic. For over forty years the West German state built strong and lasting political institutions which withstood the strains of change. The Weimar Republic was founded under completely different circumstances, and never had the crucial period of stability needed to consolidate its power.

Many scholars are optimistic about the future of German democracy. John Breuilly argues;

When one considers the problems Germany faced in 1945 and compares them to the problems that it confronts now, and when one thinks that the most basic components of economic success in developed economies are technology and what in economic jargon is known as 'human capital'- then the pessimism appears misplaced. There will be problems in the short term, but provided a sensible policy of infrastructure investment is followed in the GDR areas. I would think these will be overcome within the decade.<sup>191</sup>

Germany is certainly better prepared to deal with change now than in any other time in history, however, the danger lies in focusing too much on solving the problems with unification and missing the growing challenges from post-industrialization.

Even if the traditional parties win a major victory in 1994's Federal election, they will still have to prove that they can adapt to the new forces of change. Global economic trends and mass migration are placing enormous demands on the political structures of the western world. When similar forces acted on Germany at the turn of the century, its

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<sup>191</sup>John Breuilly, ed., The State of Germany, p. 235.

political institutions proved inflexible. Nearly fifty years of turmoil ensued contributing to two world wars, the end of the European order, and the death of millions. Hopefully, Germany and Europe will be spared a similar fate this time. Only by addressing the root causes of social tension and political transformation can there be any hope.

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